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The Cruise of the "Wild Duck"



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DANISH STORIES

THE CRUISE
OF
THE “WILD DUCK”
AND
OTHER TALES



LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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PREFACE.

AT a time when countries the most remote are laid under contribution to supply fresh literary sensations to English readers, it is strange that the contemporary literature of Denmark, a land so closely allied to us by blood and by language, should hitherto have received such scant notice. The limits of an introductory note do not permit me to examine the causes of this neglect; but I hope that these short stories, selected from the writings of Holger Drachmann, may go to prove that it is not to be ascribed to any general dearth of talent among Danish writers.

Holger Drachmann's literary

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activity has been unusually wide in its range ; he has written poems, novels, plays, sketches of travel, short stories ; the high place he holds among men of letters in his own country was gained, in the first place, by his poetry rather than by his prose. But whatever the form of his work, its spirit is intensely national ; he loves the sea as perhaps only Englishmen and Scandinavians love her, and his best pages are touched by something of her vigour, her freshness, her melancholy.

In spite of the inevitable injustice suffered by an author in the course of translation, I venture to think that English readers will feel the charm of these brief stories of a Danish fishing village—of a life so full of toil and suffering and privation, of simplicity and heroic patience.

I may add that many of Holger Drachmann's writings have already been translated into German, and a French version of his short stories is shortly to appear.

H. C. M.

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*THE CRUISE OF THE "WILD
DUCK."*



THE CRUISE OF THE "WILD DUCK."

THE old man's dead," said Daniel Vibe, putting his head in at the window, where his friend, Klaus Tommerup, sat balancing himself on two legs of his chair with a tabby cat on his knee. Klaus interrupted his caresses, let the cat go, brushed the hairs off his arm, and asked—

"When?"

"At three o'clock this morning."

"Did he suffer much?"

"Not a great deal; I thought it would have been worse. The doctor came just at the end. He said it was a good thing."

"What?"

"The doctor said it was a good thing."

"I suppose it is," said Tommerup. "When a man has lived seventy-nine years and has spent fifty of them in grudging and grumbling, and quarrelling with his family, and dies decently at last, I suppose the doctor is right in saying it's a good thing."

Daniel Vibe did not answer. He pulled off his black gloves—he had already provided himself with gloves—and looked at his hands which were stained purple. It was warm standing there in the sun. Tommerup looked at his watch-chain, and then he asked his friend—

"I suppose you are going to buy the *Wild Duck* now, Daniel?"

"First, there's the funeral."

"But I want to know if you mean to buy the cutter."

"I'm thinking of it," said Vibe.

"Very good. Then we'll be off in a fortnight. It's wretched work going about like a chimney-sweep in a hole like this. I have done it myself, and I know."

He stretched out his hand

through the window to his friend, who pressed it and walked away with drooping head, closely observed by a good many feminine spectators whose profiles were reflected in the little window mirrors all along the street.

Tommerup looked after him, and nodded approvingly.

"He does it well," he remarked—"very well."

Then he glanced in the opposite direction, down towards the little harbour, where two barges were loading bricks and a yacht was flying her flag half-mast high in honour of the only ship-owner and principal merchant of the town who had that morning exchanged time for eternity.

Neither the barges nor the yacht attracted Klaus Tommerup's attention. His glance passed over the half-rotten pier-head and fell upon a cutter-rigged boat; his dark eyes rested upon her with a sort of caress in them, and as he looked he sighed. Old Tommerup, his father, had departed this life the previous year, leaving his son a soap factory, heavily encumbered with mort-

gages, and sorely in want of capital; and the ledger which lay on the desk before him spoke of matters far enough removed from cutter-rigged boats and pleasure cruises. And at this moment the big tabby cat sprang on his master's back and drew his attention back to the book.

II.

A fortnight had passed, but young Vibe did not consider it quite correct to leave home so soon after the event, "which had deeply affected one of the principal families of the town," as the local newspaper put it. He had cut his whiskers rather short—this was also a sacrifice to propriety—and his slender figure looked very well in his black clothes; but even the most elegantly garbed grief has its drawbacks. He was very much at a loss to know how to kill time without exposing himself to the disapproval of those ever-watchful critics who had only winked at certain of his youthful

follies because he was the sole heir to old Vibe's corn and coal business. Now by his father's death he was promoted to a more serious position, and expected to behave seriously in consequence.

Daniel Vibe was a young man, but by no means an imprudent one. He went to the family physician and showed him a little red spot on his cheek. The doctor lifted his eyebrows, smiled, and said—

“I think perhaps you want a little change. You might be the better for a breath of sea air. Don't you think so? You would not object . . . ?”

And on that Daniel Vibe bought the *Wild Duck*.

He got an old lawyer, the family factotum, who had assisted his father in a good many small matters that did not, strictly speaking, lie quite within his profession, to buy the boat for him privately. And the old *examinatus juris* was pleased to see young Vibe show so much business capacity. In the club they nodded approvingly when it

came out at last that Vibe was the real purchaser ; the doctor had let a word or two fall about young Vibe's health, and in that town nothing was unpardonable that was done with a good object. Klaus Tommerup went about whistling softly to himself, as his habit was when he had anything particular on his mind ; and the next morning very early he was on board the boat doing sundry odds and ends of work about her. Later on in the day the owner himself arrived, wearing a short blue jacket, black trousers, a cap with a broad peak, and a bit of crape twisted round his anchor buttons. He looked on while the other worked, and so the morning passed.

III.

"I suppose we ought to have a man on the boat?" asked Daniel Vibe the next day.

"It wouldn't be a bad plan to have some fellow to do the rough work," answered Tommerup, still busy on board, while his friend

still stood on the pier-head and looked on.

"Who should we take, do you think?" asked the owner.

"I don't know—— Hullo, what are all the people doing down there?"

Tommerup emerged from the cabin as he spoke, and a strong gust of wind blew his hair out on one side like a fan. There was really an unusual number of people—quite half a score in all—collected on the generally deserted pier. A stiff breeze sweeping down the fairway, whistled and howled in the cutter's rigging.

"What is it?" asked Vibe of a man near him, setting his legs wide apart in a jaunty, nautical way, rather as if he took the pier for the deck of a rolling ship. A tradesman of the town who was holding his tall hat on with both hands, explained that it was Prip's son who was believed to be capsizing out in the bay.

"What?" cried Tommerup, and sprang on to the jetty—"capsizing? But he has just made a new sail for the yawl, and he

had plenty of ballast in her yesterday. I saw it myself."

"There is something wrong with him, all the same," observed the tradesman, "and they have just sent to tell old Prip."

"I must have a nearer look at that," said Tommerup, incredulously; and he drew his friend with him to the other side of the pier under the lee of the old goods-shed.

There before them lay the broad open bay, and the gusts of wind were sweeping over it, and the clouds of the clear, cool May morning were flying before the breeze above the heads of the "crowd," who held on their hats and exhausted themselves in conjectures as to the fate of the yawl. One believed that she had capsized already: another maintained that she was still up in the wind with flapping sail, and that she must drift out to sea unless, indeed, she were caught on the Quarantine Island, or left hanging on the reef of rocks out beyond the Northern Clapper.

The question was apparently

open, and so was the bay; and the yawl at that distance looked so tiny that it was possible to entertain the most contrary surmises about her. All that was actually known was that old Prip's son, Sören, had gone out into the bay that morning to try the new smack sail which he had made himself. What had happened out there was not yet clear, but it was evident that something was wrong, and at this point in the debate Klaus Tommerup turned sharp round on his heel, and sprang back on board the *Wild Duck*, saying to his friend, "Come along."

"What do you mean?" asked Vibe, with a little hesitation.

"Cast off aft, and let us get away," answered Tommerup, shortly, as he set to work on the reef points of the mainsail.

"You go by yourself," said Vibe, adding more slowly, "I must be off on business."

Tommerup looked up and nodded at his friend with a little smile. And the next moment the *Wild Duck* glided out into the bay.

IV.

Those who stood on the pier, among them young Vibe, who had found that his business was not so pressing after all, watched the cutter speed over the smooth water like a real wild duck, curtseying now and then as she met the swell, lying over first by fits and starts, and then more continuously, because it was really blowing pretty hard, and young Vibe congratulated himself with great emphasis on having given his comrade a hint to take in the two reefs in time.

"She behaves very well," declared the skipper of the yacht, with a side glance at the young man. "You should have gone with him yourself, Hr. Vibe; it's just the day for a big boat like that."

But Daniel Vibe only shrugged his shoulders, and then expressed himself to the ropemaker and the tanner and the watchmaker, in the most correct nautical terms, regarding the pretty behaviour of his vessel.

"Tommerup certainly sails her very well," he added; "but after all every one can't be a skipper by trade."

"Certainly not," answered the skipper of the yacht, rubbing his elbow.

And now as the *Wild Duck* grew gradually smaller and smaller, and the yawl was scarcely visible at all, the spectators disappeared gradually from the pier; and among the last who sauntered across the ill-paved landing-place was young Vibe.

"There's old Prip," said the tanner, pointing to a tall, thin figure leaning against a rusty anchor-stock, and holding his hand over his small gray eyes, to shade them from the sun, as he peered out across the bay.

"So it is," said Vibe; "let us hear what he has to say."

They directed their course straight towards him, but the old man did not seem to be in the least aware of their presence. It was not till Vibe's cap came directly across his line of vision

that he let his hand fall, and twisted his forefinger round the bowl of the clay pipe which was jammed tight in a corner of his mouth.

"Good morning, Prip," said Vibe.

Prip grunted in reply.

"My boat has gone out to save the yawl, Prip," said Vibe, with some satisfaction.

There was no answer. The small, gray eyes blinked at the sun, and the forefinger went on pressing down the ashes in the bowl of the pipe.

"It's a lucky thing for your son," said the tanner.

The old man screwed up his eyes, opened them suddenly, and looked down on the stout little leather cleaner with an expression of amused indifference.

"I think Sören will be glad to see her, old man," said Vibe, with a touch of familiarity in his tone.

"I think," said the old man, taking the pipe out of his mouth for a moment, "that Sören will pitch into them well as soon as they get near enough to him."

With that the pipe resumed its usual place, and old Prip turned and strolled homewards to the old erection—something between a house and a shed—which lay on the far side of the harbour, where a tumble-down tar-kiln brought to mind the long since abandoned dockyard, which had once been the pride of the town.

V.

It was blowing hard out over the bay, and the bay was not at any time to be trifled with. There was a narrow channel and a good deal of sand. It was something like two miles across to the high land on the opposite side. In the middle there was passage for big vessels, and generally there was a strong current. Out towards the sea the bay ran up into an inlet, where it was possible to put in quite snugly when it was blowing a gale outside. In this quarter lay several islets, among them the Quarantine Island; and there, too, was the

long reef of rocks known as the Northern Clapper. There were not a few of these reefs or "clappers" round about. If you had a good boat which steered well, and if you knew the channel, there was very good sailing in the bay. The skipper of the yacht always said so, and Tommerup did not contradict him. But it is to be observed that these two gentlemen had so far done very little in their lives but sail in and out and round the bay.

Klaus Tommerup on board the cutter, lay up as far as he could, and so had the wind with him going free towards the high land on the opposite coast. He had lost sight of the yawl for an hour, and then perceived her behind one of the little islands. The smack sail was lowered, and the yawl lay in smooth water by a big rock ; but Tommerup could see no one in her. He made straight for her, however, going as near as he dared venture into the shallow water. Then he backed his foresail and hailed her. A young man's head appeared above the gunwale of

the boat and vanished again. Tommerup sounded the depth of the water, ventured a dozen fathoms nearer, and shouted once more. The head again appeared. It certainly belonged to Sören Prip.

"What's the matter?" inquired the man in the yawl.

"That's what I want to know," returned the man in the cutter.

"Go to the devil!" said the voice from the yawl.

Tommerup was slightly disconcerted. But not being of a hasty disposition, he shouted to the other again—

"Is there anything wrong? Can I do anything for you?"

"It's the step of the mast that's cracked. I can't hold her to the wind," Sören answered.

"Put the yawl off, then, and I'll tow you," suggested Klaus.

"Put off yourself, and let me alone," the other retorted; and the head vanished once more.

Tommerup stayed where he was full five minutes longer, but the cutter had already twice

touched the bottom; and he became impatient.

"Come out, man, I say," he shouted, "and let there be an end to this foolery! I can't lie here all day knocking my boat to pieces."

Sören Prip stood straight up. "I tell you," he said, "I sailed the yawl out, and I'm going to sail her home again, if I wait ever so long for the chance."

He held a bottle of beer to his mouth for a moment, and then laid the bottle and himself down again in the bottom of the boat.

Tommerup hauled in his fore-sail and stood off shore. Then, making a long tack, he bore down upon the Quarantine Island, as if he meant to land there; changing his mind, he sailed for a couple of hours up and down the channel, and as by that time it was late in the afternoon, and he began to feel hungry, he fancied the man in the yawl might be in the same case, and going down to leeward of the islet, he hailed him again.

There was no answer this time ; no head appeared.

"That is certainly the man for us," thought Klaus Tommerup ; and full of inward admiration for such steadfastness, he put the cutter about and sailed fast homewards.

VI.

"You're quite right, that's the man for the *Wild Duck*," Daniel Vibe declared emphatically the next morning. The two friends sat in the cabin of the cutter which was again moored to the pier-head. A steady, pleasant breeze had been blowing for half an hour, following a stormy night and a wet daybreak. The breeze came from the other side of the bay, and, gliding into the harbour with the breeze, the top of a new smack sail presently became visible across the pier-head.

"Hullo !" cried Tommerup, "there he is !"

"Is that the man ?" asked the owner of the cutter ; and taking

out the silver whistle with which he had provided himself as part of the necessary apparatus for a pleasure sail, he whistled quite in a man-of-war's fashion to the yawl.

Klaus looked at him and then over at the yawl, as she came into the harbour. The little mast was still leaning backward with hardly any sail up, but the wind was with her, and she made way. Sören sat at the helm, and peered up at the deck of the cutter, as if the performance with the whistle, though it did not in any way concern him personally, afforded him a little amusement after the monotony of the previous day and night.

"Come alongside!" shouted Vibe.

The yawl glided quietly on her way.

"We want to speak to you!" shouted Tommerup.

"Oh, was that what you were whistling for?" asked Sören, and turned the tiller.

The yawl came alongside of the cutter; Sören sat still.

"Would you like to exchange vessels?" asked Vibe, pleasantly.

Sören measured the *Wild Duck* with his eye, and said—

"What shall I give in exchange for her?"

Tommerup laughed, and Vibe looked doubtful.

"Hr. Vibe is asking if you will engage with us?" said Tommerup.

Sören came a little nearer.

"Is your cargo coal?" he asked.

"What?" shouted Vibe.

"I mean, are we bound for England?"

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Vibe, looking quite startled.

Sören glanced from Vibe to Tommerup, and back again.

"Ah, well, after all," he continued, "that's dirty work, and it would be a sin to spoil the smart paint. So it's corn, then?"

"Can't you understand?" cried Daniel. "This is a pleasure-boat."

"All right," said Sören, with perfect composure. "That saves the trouble of lading and un-lading. It will be rather amusing to run over there just for the fun of it."

"But we are not going to England at all," Vibe announced firmly.

"Not?" said Sören, slowly, while he examined the roomy, well-fitted-out boat with critical eyes. "I thought that if Hr. Tommerup——"

"I am the owner of this vessel, not Tommerup," said Vibe, angrily. "And now let's have no more nonsense; will you come with us, or not?"

"Here I am," said Sören.

In the meantime Tommerup had taken out of his pocket, not a silver whistle, for which there wasn't after all any particular use, but his old tobacco-pipe—a short cutty—which he filled, lighted, and began to smoke with philosophic calm. It is difficult to guess the thoughts of meditative people; but as Tommerup watched the breeze playing with the smoke, there is reason to think he was wishing that his soap factory was free and unencumbered, so that he might sell it and be his own master in a boat of his own.

VII.

They sailed together, the three of them. When the weather was settled and the course fairly clear, Daniel Vibe took his place at the wheel, and Tommerup sat or lay by the stern railing. Sören's post was in the fore hatchway. If any change occurred, Tommerup's hand slipped inadvertently, as it were, on to the tiller, while Vibe's hand moved away as if unconsciously, and the owner contented himself for the moment with repeating in a loud voice the words of command softly suggested by his comrade. When the squall was over, or the shoal passed, the hands changed places again by the same tacit agreement. But if the course became more difficult, and the breeze dropped; or if the squall seemed likely to last long, Klaus Tommerup's body followed his hand to the tiller, while Daniel Vibe found a temporary refuge on the companion. Sören minded his own business,

and paid no attention to any one else. But when a reef or two had been taken in, and the owner happened, once in a way, to be still at the helm, Sören put the hard knuckle of his right forefinger between his teeth, and repeated half aloud to himself a favourite sentence, "We have a fine lot of stuff on board; real good stuff on board her."

So they sailed together, and each one naturally fell in time into the part which best suited him.

It was an August day—Daniel Vibe's twenty-ninth birthday. To receive the congratulations of his family, and to drink punch at the club in the evening, was not making enough of the day according to his ideas; and a real revel, with a big dinner, and so on, was not seemly, his relations thought, so soon after the great bereavement. He therefore provisioned the *Wild Duck* particularly well, and invited some of the best people of the town to come with him for a sail, which might perhaps last till the next day. Possibly this pros-

pect deterred them ; in any case the guests failed to put in an appearance. Daniel Vibe resolved to show that he could do without them ; they set sail and glided out of the harbour. The weather was extremely promising, and the tanner and the chemist who had been invited at the last moment to fill the vacant places stood on the pier and repented in their hearts that they had made it a point of honour to decline.

Away they went. The captain was now in white trousers, light blue flannel shirt under his pea-jacket, and the peaked cap ; and he still wore a bit of crape over his gilt buttons. His long fair whiskers made him look quite English, and he really was a very handsome birthday figure.

Of course he steered. The wind was fair and fresh. Tommerup thought the barometer showed a tendency to fall, but Daniel declared that he wouldn't ask advice from any weather-glass on his birthday. At breakfast he was evidently in the highest spirits. Sören sat for-

ward and stared at the horizon, with his knuckle in his mouth, putting a word now and again into the conversation. As for Tommerup, he had brought a cushion up from the cabin and had made a comfortable place for himself in the stern. Beside him he placed a basket of provisions, to which he gave his undivided attention as soon as they were clear of the harbour swell. The soap factory had now come quite to a standstill, and the old woman—the solitary remnant of his father's household—who attended to his few wants, had announced that morning that her master did not give her an adequate sum for the weekly expenses, and that if it were not increased she must leave his service. Tommerup had managed to content her for the moment, but all the same, he had left his coffee and his bread and butter almost untouched, and there was a cloud on his broad, open brow as he walked down to the harbour with his cat under his arm. Klaus had not found it in his

heart to leave the animal alone at home. The low, dreary old house had looked very melancholy indeed that morning in its owner's eyes, and he did not fancy it wore a much more cheerful aspect in the eyes of the cat. Tommerup's family had died out; he had no enemies in the town, and few friends; but he had his cat, and the cat's name was Jacob.

So he lay on the cushion which was stuffed with the best cork, and Jacob lay on his knee and blinked at the sun, and devoured the occasional mouthfuls of cold chicken which his master bestowed upon him.

VIII.

Daniel Vibe was, as I have said, in excellent spirits. He meant that day to get right out to sea, he said, and they made straight for the other side of the bay.

Near the inlet they passed another little vessel belonging to the town, loaded with peat and potatoes—no unusual freight.

The boat was heavily laden, the piles of peat were hanging over the sides, she beat up with difficulty against the tide.

Vibe scoffed at her master's seamanship.

"Faith," said he, "that's a fine trade!"

"The man gets a living for himself and his wife and child out of it, any way," remarked Sören, thoughtfully.

"What, has he got a family on board along with the peat?" laughed the captain.

"They don't live on peat," said Sören. "The man does a very good business, they say."

Tommerup said nothing, but nodded in a friendly way to the man, who responded by waving his cap.

"You ought to go in for something of that sort yourself, Tommerup," said Vibe. "Then you would have a chance of being your own master; while as it is——"

"As it is things are in a bad way," said Tommerup, stroking the cat's back. "You mean that a peat barge that goes is

better than a soap factory that stands still," he went on. "You are great at logic, Daniel. Lend me your corkscrew."

"Yes, let's have a drink," said the captain.

They did have a drink. The first bottle of sherry was soon emptied, and, in spite of Tommerup's objections, another was opened. Tommerup refused to drink any more, but Vibe kept passing the bottle to Sören, who did not refuse the captain's invitation. And he was not accustomed to wine.

The Clapper was passed; the *Wild Duck* went curtseying out into the open sea. The captain's pale face was a little flushed. His cap was on the side of his head, and he looked rather rakish. Klaus sat and stroked his cat, and looked up at the sky and across the cutter's sail.

"The wind is freshening," remarked Sören.

"So much the better," cried Vibe; but he added immediately, "Shall we take in a reef?"

"It would be as well," said Tommerup. "Luff!"

They took in a reef, and in the afternoon, while the *Wild Duck* kept out in the open, this is what happened.

Vibe sat at the helm, although the wind, as Sören had foretold, grew fresher and fresher. The wine was doing its work; the captain was bolder to-day. He meant to show them that he could sail his own ship. So he stayed where he was, and a new bottle was opened, of which Sören had a fair share.

Klaus Tommerup looked on for a little while and forbade the sailor presently to drink any more.

"You let him alone!" cried Vibe. "I am the captain of this boat, and it's my birthday."

Tommerup nodded. The vessel was labouring a good deal, and now and then shipped a sea. So he put his cat inside the breast of his coat, and buttoned him safely up, and then resumed his place on his cork cushion, apparently indifferent, but really keeping a sharp look-out on each of the helmsman's movements.

Sören drank, and was as happy as a child. He was wet through already, but the water did not seem to trouble him as much as it troubled Jacob. The cat sat with his head out, but whenever a wave washed over the boat he put it in and mewed.

"Hold her a little off, Daniel," said Tommerup.

Sören stood upright with his hands behind him, holding on to the topmast stay. At Tommerup's word he made a grimace, an action which, strictly speaking, overstepped the limits of discipline.

"*We* are going to sail her to-day, aren't we, Sören?" cried the captain.

"So we are," laughed Sören; and again he accepted the bottle, which Tommerup himself had to pass to him.

The air became gradually more and more hazy. The sun shone red through the mist.

"I don't like the look of it," said Tommerup, glancing back at the shore, which was fading into the grey blue distance.

"Bosh!" said Vibe.

"We ought to turn back," answered his comrade. "It will be hard enough to beat up now and it will be fresher still before evening."

"Perhaps you're afraid?" cried the captain boldly.

At that moment Sören's feet slipped away from him, and he went flat down on his back on the wet deck.

Vibe grew pale. Sören was up again in a moment, but Tommerup looked severely at him, and Sören seemed a little ashamed. He had not appreciated the birthday sherry quite rightly. The drink had been stronger than the cutter's sailor.

And so came the first flash and the first peal of thunder. The sea turned purple and grey, and was specked inshore with innumerable white dots, and the wind whistled ominously. Tommerup rose to his knees, buttoned up his coat in spite of Jacob's evident objection, and put his hand on Vibe's shoulder.

"Get out of the way," he said. "We shall have the storm on us in a minute; it's no time for fooling."

But Vibe was obstinate.

"As you please," said Tommerup, and eased the mainsail. "Stand by the halyards, Sören; let go the peak halyard; let the throat halyard be!"

At this moment the cutter dipped her nose under an unusually high sea, which the helmsman had not parried. Sören clung to the hoop of the mast; the water rushed foaming aft, and filled the hole in which the helmsman stood.

Vibe let go the tiller and shot up out of the hole like a cork from a bottle. The boat careened right over, so that the mainsail dipped in the water. Vibe lost his balance, slid to leeward, and went overboard.

"Let go the foresail!" shouted Tommerup, and put the helm hard over with his foot. Then, turning quick as lightning, he snatched up the cork cushion and threw it overboard, where Vibe's head appeared above the water.

The cutter shot up into the wind.

"Is there no rope?" shouted

Tommerup. "Cut the jib halyard,—cut it away with your knife, man! Now a turn of the rope round the oar and over with it. He is holding on to the cushion. That's right; pay out the rope. Now he's got it. All right, haul him in—here he is!"

And Klaus Tommerup bent over the railing, hauled in his comrade and pushed him into the cabin without ceremony. Jacob, who found himself also in an uncomfortable position, was mewling miserably and he was sent into the cabin too.

"It's no good whining about it now," remarked his master.

Sören looked at him penitently.

"I deserve a thrashing, Hr. Tommerup," he said. "I did not think that the stuff was so strong."

"You must wait for your thrashing till we come ashore," answered the other. "It remains to be seen if we ever do. Down with the sail! Down with the throat halyard! Confound you, man, look alive!"

Here it comes." And while the *Wild Duck* was shrouded in the sheet of rain, and lay heeling over on her side with bare poles, he muttered to himself, "It's lucky for Daniel it didn't come sooner."

IX.

Just in front of the inlet that ran out of the bay, on the island that had been long known as the Quarantine Island, there stood a yellow brick building with a high tiled roof, surrounded by ruined cottages and deserted gardens. The inside of the house corresponded to its exterior; half-ruined as it was, it still retained an air of dignity—a reminiscence of the days when epidemics were in fashion, and were treated with respectful consideration by the authorities. There are on our coast many such desolate outlying stations, mouldering fortresses, decayed depôts. There is about them something of the sentiment that attaches to old castles and old soldiers.

The afternoon was passing into the evening, and there was more than a touch of autumn in the air. Right across the island, from the little harbour up to the highest rampart, there stretched a row of weather-beaten trees, with all their branches growing out on one side, not unlike a worn-out comb or toothbrush. The storm—for now it was really a storm—whistled wildly among these old veterans; there was not much else left for it to do. The coarse yellow grass outside the windows of the building waved to and fro, and the gusts of wind rattled against the convex panes.

In the large room, whose scanty furniture dated from the days of Napoleon—a silhouette of the Emperor on horseback still adorned the mirror—the inspector was sitting. What he was inspector of, no one quite knew. If he had inspected himself, as he sat in the deep armchair covered with flowery tapestry, he would have discovered himself to be a respectable old ruin, like the rest of the

island. He had once been a strong, broad-shouldered man, but he was now bent with rheumatism, and there was in his eye a watery gleam that might perhaps be connected with the corner cupboard behind him, whose door stood open, revealing two or three decanters. Before him on the little table stood a steaming mixture, which he now and then sipped with trembling hand.

Some distance from the arm-chair, by the gable window, sat a young girl with a book before her, that looked like a family volume of sermons. She had been reading, but had paused to look attentively at the sea. Then she went back to her reading, but evidently with an effort. It might be imagined that the book was a sort of necessity to which a girl might submit in a rather hopeless position, left to herself on a dreary island with a father like the one in the arm-chair, not knowing what to do with her youth and health, or how to find an outlet for her longings and her strength.

Now and then, as she glanced from the printed page to the armchair, there was visible in her eyes an expression of profound melancholy, out of keeping with her years, of weary resignation to an inevitable fate. But when she looked away from him with a little shudder, and glanced again through the casement at the world outside, her expression altered, revealing a gleam of resolution, the result possibly of continual intercourse with the sea.

Every ruin has some point round which the mouldering fragments may cling for a long time, and the sea has strength and freshness for every day. It is not to pass away till all things pass; and that hour is long in coming.

The girl's world lay there beyond those windows. It was little or great, according as you looked at it. At this moment it contained a single boat that with reefed mainsail and close-reefed foresail, in the red flush of the sunset, was beating up towards the inlet against wind

and tide, and doing her utmost apparently to clear the rocky reef, the Northern Clapper, which lay to leeward of her.

The girl knew the pilot's boat, and the few other vessels along the coast. But she could not connect this one with any owner. She knew enough to be aware that the situation was very serious, and she watched still more intently, and presently uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"What's the matter?" asked the old man in the armchair.

She did not heed the question. Like a seabird with wounded wing, the boat drifted sideways, and the breakers on the reef were near—terribly near.

"Ah! . . . thank Heaven!" she cried.

"But what is it?" asked the voice from the armchair again.

"It's a boat which . . . It was making straight for . . . Now she has righted herself again. Look for yourself!"

"Not a trace of a boat," stammered the inspector, whose window looked to the west, while the gable looked to the east.

"They can't get up to the town, father; that is impossible. I think—yes, I really think," she repeated after a few moments' anxious scrutiny, "that they are coming over to us. Poor men! how wet they must be!"

"Hot water," said the inspector, "that's what they'll want. Hot water and something in it!"

X.

From the little harbour of the island three men walked up to the brick building. The one in the middle was supported by his stronger friends on either side.

They opened the outer door; there was a little sound of stamping and splashing in the brick-paved entry; then they knocked at the door, and finally entered the big room.

"Good evening. Excuse me," said Tommerup.

"By your leave," said Sören.

Daniel Vibe said nothing. They led him to the hard high-backed sofa, and he dropped on

to it with a groan ; it seemed to him that he was still sailing.

The young girl had been standing doubtfully in the middle of the room. Now she hastened to the door, and came back immediately with a clean towel and a glass of water.

"Your friend is ill. You have been in great danger?"

She addressed her remark to Tommerup, who, dripping wet as he was, nodded with some embarrassment, and struggled with the captain as with a child. Sören assisted him ; and the floor round the three of them was like a little sea.

"We have a bed all ready," said the girl. "Would that not be the best thing?"

Vibe had recovered himself a little. He sat up and threw out his arms.

"Bed!" said he ; "who talks of going to bed?"

He looked wildly round, and his glance fell on the little table beside the armchair. He staggered across the floor, snatched up the glass and emptied it at a draught. The old man raised

his large eyes approvingly, and spoke to his daughter in his harsh voice.

"I told you so," he said, jerking his elbow in the direction of the cupboard. "Hot water and the decanter."

The girl stood again as if uncertain what to do. She looked away from her father with a sigh, and seemed silently to ask Tommerup's advice.

"Yes, let us have something hot," he answered reassuringly, "and if you had any dry clothes?"

He pointed first at Vibe, then glanced at himself and Sören; and then he apologised for the condition of the floor.

The inspector's daughter blushed, though there was apparently no particular reason why she should blush because three strangers, dripping wet and much the worse for their trip, had visited the nearest island in stress of weather. She exchanged a few words with her father about the big wardrobe in the garret, and then disappeared.

There were now three men in

the room, besides the ruin in the armchair. Vibe sat down again on the sofa. He was evidently much shaken, excited, nervous, and very pale ; he was the living picture of a weak character, just escaped from a great danger, and still suffering from the effects of sea-sickness. He shook with cold in his wet clothes ; the hot drink had done him a little good, but only a little, and he sat there shaking his head like an owl in a cage.

Tommerup surveyed the different objects in the room as well as the fading light permitted. The attention he paid to certain things seemed to indicate an old acquaintance with them. He tried to get up a conversation with the armchair but the attempt was sadly fruitless. The inspector only uttered a few unintelligible words and disjointed sentences, and ended with the assurance that they should soon have something hot.

"Ah, yes," said Sören, who was amusing himself by letting his feet squelch in his shoes as

he walked across the floor, "that isn't a bad idea—unless Hr. Tommerup has anything against it."

"I have nothing against it *now*," answered Klaus. "What do you say, Vibe? Come, pull yourself together a bit."

But that was more than the captain was capable of doing at present. He moved his head from side to side, and uttered a broken monologue, of which fragments, such as "never sail again . . ." and "the confounded cutter . . ." were alone audible.

The door opened, and the daughter of the house came in with a light in her hand.

"The gentlemen can go in now and change their things," said she.

And so they did. The captain was helped in and out of his clothes like a child. To Tommerup's repeated suggestion that he should accept the bed that had been offered to him, he answered with a mixture of fretfulness and defiance—

"No, he was going to show them . . ."

In the meantime the table was laid for supper. A large jug was set steaming among the eggs and sausages and bread and butter, and what Vibe showed them was that he was thirsty rather than hungry. To the old man's evident satisfaction, he mixed himself first one glass and then another and then retreated to the sofa, and lay listening to the brief plain narrative of their expedition, which Tommerup gave on his comrade's behalf and his own.

But the simplicity with which the great events of the day were represented was not at all to Daniel Vibe's mind. Encouraged by the mixture, in the midst of concocting his third glass he broke into Tommerup's story with such striking additions that his friend was silenced and Vibe continued alone.

They had really gone through unheard-of dangers. And if he himself had not had the confounded ill-luck to stumble and go overboard at the critical moment—an accident which however had given him a chance to

display his dexterity in swimming—they would perhaps . . .

Sören could not contain himself. He began to laugh with half an egg and a slice of sausage in his mouth.

The captain grew angry.

"What are you grinning at, you idiot?" said he.

Klaus Tommerup interposed to keep the peace. The young girl who sat at some distance from the table watched him intently. From the armchair there came occasionally broken expressions of surprise and approval to which no one paid any attention at all.

Then the captain was seized with another attack of giddiness; his face turned yellow-white, and when he had disposed of another glass the tears streamed from his eyes, and he declared Klaus Tommerup to be his preserver and his best friend. Sören nodded assent. Tommerup asked the girl to clear the table. The captain did not want to go to bed—not at all—he wanted to drink another glass to his friend and preserver, he wanted the

armchair to pledge him—he wanted every one to be cheerful.

“All right,” said Tommerup, laughing. “Let us be cheerful by all means,” and he smiled reassuringly at the girl as if to say, “We must let him have plenty of rope.”

“That’s right,” cried Vibe. “I am glad you are thawing at last.”

Daniel Vibe, without exactly being a musician, was fond of singing. His taste lay rather in the music-hall direction. Rich young men in small towns—and in large ones too—frequently have a turn for this kind of music. It requires no serious preliminary study, but chiefly a readiness to applaud noisily, and a purse opened freely to stimulate the singers who, like nightingales, trill their prettiest songs after sundown.

Daniel Vibe sang. Tommerup raised his eyebrows a little and glanced at the girl. She was listening with a faint smile to the funny falsetto voice. She could not hear the first words distinctly, but suddenly she set her lips together and moved her chair.

"That's enough of that," said Tommerup.

"What's wrong?" asked Vibe, and burst into careless laughter.

The wealthy young hero of the small seaport town was not endowed with a particularly refined nature and perhaps he did not know himself how coarse his song was. A glance from his friend now seemed to make him aware of the girl's presence for the first time.

"Oh, I see," he said, "the young lady. You needn't be afraid of me, Missy. You may trust me. . . ."

Here Tommerup spoke to him gravely.

"All right," Vibe went on, "just as you like. You're my preserver; . . . you're a regular brick, that's what you are. Come on, let's have a drink together, and the girl too. No one's going to hurt you, Missy; but you see, when a fellow's had such a close shave, . . . and then to lie half drowned in the cabin. . . . Tommerup, you're my friend, and if I'm not to sing, by Jove, you must."

Tommerup vainly endeavoured to soothe him. Nothing would do but a song. With his thoughtful air, and his good-humoured little smile, he at last agreed.

"All right," he said, "it's your birthday, and so you shall have your own way."

This is what he sang :—

SONG.

I am contented with my store ;
Altho' I should not be the worse
For just a very little more,
I covet not my neighbour's purse ;—
For thine is thine,
And mine is mine,
Do what you will, mine it is still.

The sun that shines as bright for me
As for the richest man I meet ;
The breeze that blows as fresh and free ;
Good appetite and slumbers sweet ;—
No money buys
What most I prize ;
Bid what you will, mine it is still.

And while I'm roaming far away,
I'll hear perchance that one at home
Looks out for me from day to day,
And wonders why I do not come ;
Then hand in hand
We two shall stand :
The world may frown, she'll be my own.

After Vibe had relieved his mind by declaring the song too sentimental for grown-up men,

Sören asked leave to say something, and proceeded to make a little speech in honour of Tommerup, ending by congratulating the captain on having had one man on board fit to look after himself and the boat and the others into the bargain.

Here Vibe again grew white; and when he had got the better of his reviving recollections of the terrors of the sea, he stared coldly at Sören, and rejoined that the whole thing was wholly and solely the fault of the *Wild Duck*; she was the wretchedest *Wild Duck*, the most miserable cutter he'd ever seen; and it was a shame that his old friend Tommerup had ever palmed her off on him.

Tommerup smiled, but Sören took the remark very seriously indeed.

"You can strike my name off the list of your crew, Hr. Vibe," said he; "and you can say I'm a common sailor, and that I loaf about at home doing nothing—you can say so and welcome. I can tell you there are worse ways of putting in the time than that.

My father and my grandfather never did anything when they were my age but shoot, and sail, and fish, and all the same one of them's gone to his grave an honest man, and the other'll do the same; and so shall I, without cheating a soul out of a single farthing, and without letting every bad girl in the town make a fool of me. But when you begin grumbling at Hr. Tommerup, I tell you, you'd best go home and keep quiet, and it's a pity you didn't do it a good while ago."

"I say, Sören!" said Klaus.

"Oh, let him go on!" cried Vibe, flushing and turning pale, and then bursting into tears, as a weak man will at critical moments. He threw himself on the sofa, overcome with alcohol and emotion, and wept freely.

Sören looked perplexed, and Tommerup laid his hand consolingly on his friend's shoulder.

"I shall never set foot on the cutter again," he moaned, "never again."

"How are you going to get home, then?" muttered Sören.

"I'll knock a hole in her and sink her as soon as we get back," said Vibe.

"It would be better to sell her," responded the persistent Sören.

"Never!" was the answer.

"Well, then, you ought to give her to Hr. Tommerup," suggested Sören. "He has done enough to-day to earn her, and a good deal more."

Vibe did not answer at once; but presently he sat up and extended his hand as he had seen travelling actors do and as he always did himself when he made a speech at the club.

"Tommerup, my friend, my preserver!" said he. "I owe you my life twice over to-day. First because you fished me out of the water, and then because you sailed us safely here. I give you the *Wild Duck*."

Tommerup was endeavouring to release himself from his friend's embrace.

"You'll have forgotten all about it to-morrow, Daniel," he answered, smiling.

"What!" said Vibe. "You

think I'm drunk? Well, well. . . . But I'll show you. . . . Look here, my good girl, can you give me paper and pen and ink? I really mean it, . . . and you'll be paid for it, too. . . . I'll give you a kiss afterwards. That's right . . . the old man over there shall be a witness. No, he's too far gone. . . . Never mind, Sören and you shall be witnesses. There—it's a deed of gift *in optima forma*, as we lawyers say, and Tommerup can get it registered to-morrow at the office."

He succeeded in putting on the paper what follows:

"Herewith, of my own free will, without any compulsion, I present the cutter *Wild Duck*, with all she contains, to my friend, Klaus Tommerup, as an acknowledgment of his having saved my life to-day.

"Signature."

"Date."

XI.

"That's done," said Klaus Tommerup an hour later, as

he returned to the sitting-room from the apartment where he had put his magnanimous friend to bed, placing him for the time in Sören's charge.

It is sad to have to say that the former owner of the *Wild Duck* had gone to bed in a decidedly intoxicated condition. The kiss which he had tried to force on the young girl, shortly after the completion of his noble deed, had been rejected with disgust, and Tommerup, hitherto so patient, had interfered with a sharp rebuke. Vibe apologised and drank to their reconciliation, and by that time he was done for.

Tommerup stood again in the room. The inspector's daughter did not inquire after his friend's health. She was occupied—very sorrowfully occupied—with some one else.

Tommerup looked at the arm-chair. He could not conceal from himself that the inspector was done for also, and in a more wretched and helpless condition than his hare-brained friend.

They stood together before the armchair, and the old man stared up at them with fixed glassy eyes.

The young man touched the arm of the girl who stood with drooping head, and asked with profound reverence in his voice, "May I help you?"

She turned away from him to hide her shame—the shame that a father had brought upon his child. Tommerup lifted the old man out of his chair, and said to the girl:

"You might light me down the passage."

She took the light and went before him to her father's room, and there together, without exchanging a single unnecessary word, they put the inspector to bed.

Then they sat together in the sitting-room with the candle before them on the table. Tommerup poured out a large glass of cold water and swallowed it hastily.

"You must be very tired," said she. "Would you not rather——"

He took her hand and tried to bring back her old smile and partly succeeded.

"I would rather talk to you," he replied.

She drew her hand gently away, laid it with the other in her lap, and waited. He hesitated, and she came to his aid.

"It is a long time since you have been to see us," she said. "Why has it been so long?"

Klaus Tommerup got up from his seat, moved a little away, and then came nearer.

"Won't you let me hold your hand?" he said. "It has been a very distracting day and . . . Forgive me . . . but you see, when I hold your hand I can explain things better to you. You don't know, of course, that everything has gone very badly with me since the last time that I was here, and I determined not to come back again until I could ask you to give me this hand that I am now holding. . . . And it isn't my fault that I came to-day," he added, hastily.

She tried to draw her hand away, but what Klaus held, he

generally held fast. She let it be, and looked at him gravely.

"Did you never think," she said, "that things might be going still worse here?"

He felt the reproach in her tone. In her sorrowful eyes he read an accusation of selfishness. At such a moment the best men are abashed, and have nothing to say for themselves, and so it was with Klaus. But presently he put his other hand over hers, and holding it between both his, he murmured—

"Poor girl! poor child! What an ass I am!"

She lowered her eyes, and he felt her hot tears falling on his hands. There she sat and there he stood, bending lower and lower over her.

The wind rattled the panes; the flame of the candle flickered. The storm was raging outside, and Tommerup felt that there was a storm also in the girl's heart. He was not much calmer himself.

What happened next? What always happens on such occasions? We know it all quite

well and still we always like to hear it again. But at this moment they were interrupted by a doleful sound that came with the wind through the window.

Tommerup listened.

The same sound was heard again, only still more doleful.

Tommerup sprang up,—a little to the girl's surprise—threw open the window, and called—

"Jacob!"

A cat sprang through the window on to the floor and thence to the sofa. Tommerup picked him up, laughing, and showed him to the girl. She had been a little disconcerted by this interruption, but now she was smiling too.

"It has really been a distracting day," said Klaus. "I left my best friend on board and forgot all about him. Heaven knows how he escaped drowning when the cabin filled."

He passed his hand caressingly down the cat's back, then he put him down and turned earnestly to the girl.

"I spoke just now," he said, "of my best friend. You can

see by that what a fool I am, since I have made a close friend of that little creature. But Jacob did me a good turn just now. I was beginning to lose heart, and I should not do that. For however poor I am, there is some one here who is worse off still, and so . . . Now give me both your hands, and promise me that you will stick to me through thick and thin. . . . Ah, don't cry—come here, come to me!"

He opened his arms, and the girl clung to him, and sobbed, with her arms round his neck—

"I will, I will. . . . Only trust me!"

It was rather late and the candle had burned very low, when Klaus Tommerup stepped into the room which had been allotted to the three companions. And he could not refrain from waking up Sören to tell him the great news.

"Well, well," said Sören, and slapped his knee. "'Then it's you, after all, who are keeping your birthday to-day! Anyhow, you have got a present."

"That I have," said Tommerup, with a beaming face.

Then he held up his candle-end and let the light fall on Daniel Vibe who was snoring loudly.

"He is sleeping it off," he observed. "A drunken man is an ugly sight, to be sure. Just think, Sören, if that were your brother, or if either of us had a father like——"

"He is an ass," said Sören, rubbing his eyes, "but he has a good business at home yonder."

"So he has," said Tommerup; and he blew out the light.

XII.

What remains to be told ?

Nothing much, for everything went its natural way.

The second day from that evening Klaus went to see his friend who sat in the outer office, while the old lawyer, the pillar of the house, worked in the adjoining room.

There was a certain embar-

rassment in Daniel Vibe's greeting.

Tommerup took a half-sheet of paper out of his pocket-book and presented it to his friend.

Vibe coloured.

"I just wanted to give you back this paper," said Tommerup quietly. "I fancy you wrote it rather in a hurry."

"Not at all," said Vibe, glancing a little anxiously towards the adjoining room. "You have free leave to make use of it—that's to say, you may regard the cutter quite as your own."

Tommerup looked at him and he blushed a little more.

"You know very well, Daniel," said he, "that I should never press you to keep that promise, although I would sooner sail that boat than do anything else in the world—no, not exactly anything in the world, but sooner than most things. I only want to know how we stand; because yesterday after we landed you kept out of my way the whole afternoon. Either we can go on as we have done

till now, and I have your leave to use the boat when I like, while you are still her owner and her captain; or else the *Wild Duck* is mine, honestly earned and honestly paid, and you have my leave to use her as much as you like, and to put on as much sail as you please."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Vibe.

"Well, then," said Tommerup, with his old smile, "the boat is really mine?"

"The boat is yours, confound her!" said Vibe.

"Thanks," said Tommerup; and he shook hands with his friend. "Don't be angry," he added, "if I ask you to exchange this bit of paper for a regular document, drawn up by the old fox in there. For this counts for nothing, as far as I can judge."

"Give me the paper," said Vibe. "I will give you a proper deed of gift this evening at the club."

They shook hands again — Tommerup, as he had always done, Vibe in a slightly altered

way. But what could any one guess from that?

The same evening Tommerup received his deed of gift. The new owner of the *Wild Duck* wished to give a punch supper, but the late owner excused himself on the ground of having a headache.

After that Tommerup often sailed with Sören across to the Quarantine Island and almost gave up going to the club. One pleasure has to make way for another. But one very wet autumn evening he came into the club again.

He did not notice anything unusual at first, and was not at all aware that the other men there avoided him. But the apothecary who was every one's friend and every one's adviser, took him aside and explained with a good deal of circumlocution, that Daniel Vibe had several times told how Tommerup had taken him over to the Quarantine Island and made him drunk along with the "tipsy inspector and the little hussy his daughter," and so had tricked him out of the cutter.

Tommerup shook the rain from his coat-sleeves, looked up, asked the apothecary on his word of honour if what he said was true, and then went straight into the most select room of all, where Vibe sat among the other leading people of the place, playing high and drinking more rum-punch than was good for him.

Klaus was standing in front of Vibe before the latter had noticed his approach. Vibe grew rather pale.

"Look here, Daniel Vibe," said Tommerup, "I'm told you have played me a very dirty trick. As far as I could I have always been a true comrade to you. Will you say here before every one that the apothecary lies when he says that you have said this and that about me in my absence?"

There was perfect silence in this very select room, and in those adjoining it. Vibe dropped his cards and stretched out a somewhat unsteady hand for his glass.

"Do you mean—do you mean to assault me?" he asked, look-

ing round on his companions for assistance in case of need.

One of the other players who had been a friend of old Tommerup's, spoke up.

"Vibe has told us all," he said, "that that's how Tommerup managed it."

"Good," said Tommerup, and fastened a button of his coat. "Then I invite my former friend and comrade, Daniel Vibe, here on the spot to declare that he has slandered me falsely."

Vibe bent his head without answering.

"You see, gentlemen," continued Tommerup, with a very slight quiver in his voice, "that Hr. Vibe is in an awkward position. As far as I am concerned I have time to wait; I have always had time. But no one can wait indefinitely where his honour is in question. I expect at midday to-morrow a written apology from my former friend and I shall read it aloud here to-morrow evening. Should it not come, I shall declare Daniel Vibe to be a common slanderer, and I shall

suggest that you should turn him out of your society, because he is not fit to be among decent people."

And so Tommerup went away.

The next morning Tommerup received his apology. It was couched in the briefest possible terms and hit the medium between excuse and denial so neatly that the recipient bit his lip and murmured, "The cunning old fox!"

None the less he went to the club and read the letter aloud — Vibe was absent — to the assembled members, and then he addressed the following little speech to them:—

"This is not an excuse," said he, "such as I had a right to expect. But all the same I accept it, and I do not want to proceed any further in the matter. Hr. Vibe has a lot of people in his office, and he's a big man in this town and I am nothing. That's a fact I know I shall have to reckon with. But I part from you, gentlemen, persuaded that I have kept my good name untarnished and that is enough for

me. If I stayed in the club I should necessarily be a cause of offence. My being here would always keep one man away, and you can spare me better than him. Thanks for the good times we have had here together, and farewell."

A month later the soap factory was sold, but Tommerup did not sell it himself. Some one else was kind enough to do it for him. All the outstanding claims had been collected by one person and that person proceeded to turn Klaus Tommerup into the street with nothing but a few absolutely necessary personal belongings, among them the cat Jacob.

Everything was sold — the whole property that for many generations had belonged to Tommerup's family; and so all claims were settled. Only the cutter, the *Wild Duck*, remained in his possession and in the meantime he lived on board her. The townspeople were discreet enough not to trouble him with visits.

The day after he had settled into his new quarters, old Prip, Sören's father, strolled down the

pier. Tommerup put his head out of the companion. The old man stood still and took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Look here, Hr. Tommerup," said he, "Sören says there is room for you at home in the shed."

"I beg your pardon?"

"We have got two rooms ready for you; they are rather small, but they look west; you can see out across the bay. And we will share the kitchen; and so you can be married."

The old man replaced his pipe and walked away.

Tommerup gazed after him.

Shortly after, Sören made his appearance.

"Are you two mad?" shouted Tommerup to him.

"Not that I know of," said Sören. "You can't live with a wife on board the boat; anyhow, not with children."

"Who told you I was thinking of getting married?" asked Tommerup, after a moment's despondent reflection.

Sören opened his eyes.

"Every one that has a sweetheart wants to get married. Why

not let the parson arrange it? That's the easiest way."

Tommerup could not refrain from smiling.

"The question is, Sören, what shall we have to live on?"

"Peat and potatoes, of course. And you'll take me with you?"

Klaus Tommerup jumped up, sprang on to the pier, and pressed Sören's hand.

"I had forgotten all about the peat," he cried.

"Yes, and the potatoes, too," added the accurate Sören.

So the firm of Klaus Tommerup and Sören Prip really sailed with the above-mentioned freight, and it soon became evident that the *Wild Duck* with that freight could keep a man and his wife and child besides. The price of peat continued to rise, while the love at home did not go down. But whether Hr. Tommerup, after the shed was pulled down and a house put up in its place, and after the *Wild Duck* had a duckling in the shape of a smaller boat, and after both of these had been

replaced by a big yacht—whether Tommerup then applied to the club for membership again, this story does not say.



SHE DIED AND WAS BURIED.



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THERE were three of them, two big brothers, Julius and Jacob, and their sister Anna.

The parents were dead; the father had been drowned at sea, the mother had died in bed, "of something inside her," they said.

Julius and Jacob fished together in the father's boat, the only thing he had left behind him. Julius resembled the picture on the matchboxes; he laughed continually, except when something quite unusual demanded serious attention, and then he laughed twice as much afterwards to make up. He was active and industrious, and sprang at his work like a cat; yet when

he had a chance of getting a few minutes' rest, he would sit doubled up, holding his sides like a man with some internal pain. He was always laughing at one thing or another, no matter what. There was nothing amiss with him; he took after his father.

Jacob was like his mother. He was taciturn, sullen, slow at work, slow to smile. There was something wrong inside him too, but necessity was upon him, and drove him on; the continual labour hardened him; the inevitable diet, fish and porridge, porridge and fish, suited him. There was nothing to prevent him from living in the open air—on the contrary; and the doctor declared that, in spite of his delicacy, he might live to be an old man.

The girl was called Anna; she was fair, well-built, well-developed, of the strong fisher race, but she was extraordinarily pale. That was the mother again. And as early as the year of her confirmation the brothers had told her, in the easy way in which Vangaa people talk about family affairs,

“ You’re sure to die young, Anna.”

This was the word of consolation she took with her to the capital when she went away to her first situation.

The first summer the family she was with came to the village of Vangaa to spend some weeks in the country, and Anna came with them. Her eyes had grown a little dull, but the light came back to them when she took Julius aside and showed him a photograph.

“ Is that what he looks like ? ” asked Julius, beginning to chuckle.

It was Anna’s sweetheart—a gentleman in a black dress-coat, a tall hat in one hand, the other hand resting on a railing covered with a creeper which seemed to want all the support it could find. He stood in a thoughtful attitude, half in profile, his long, shining hair brushed up into a little curl over his ear; across the low-cut waistcoat an eyeglass hung on a thick black cord.

“ Is he a play-actor ? ” asked Julius, after he had examined the back of the portrait, and had

discovered a number of half-circles drawn round a three-legged goat and a compass.

"He is a waiter for the present," Anna answered, seriously, passing her hand over the face where Julius' finger had left a damp mark. "He is going to set up for himself next autumn."

"In a public-house?"

"Yes—in a restaurant. Perhaps he'll get a steamer, but it's not certain. He says there are so many after the same thing."

"What's his name?"

"Ludvig."

"No, I mean his real name."

"Oh, Bisserup."

Julius had never heard of such a name. It was too funny for anything, and he went into fits of laughter over it.

But after all the name was not the chief thing. Was he good-tempered as a rule? Yes, that he was. What presents had he given her? Money generally: not much, but when he earned anything extra she had a share of it; and she had gone with him often to the theatre, for he was very fond of the theatre, and

he could say it all afterwards himself, and he talked altogether so beautifully and was as steady as you could expect him to be in that sort of situation and as soon as he could set up for himself and had got either a public-house or a steamer, they were to be married.

Julius closed one eye, glanced at her sideways, and asked the grey cat that was passing by if all was right.

Anna took the photograph from him quite calmly.

"Are you silly?" she said. "Do you think I would let him make a fool of me?"

In the winter the merchant in whose house Anna was servant failed. The family had to economise, and the girl had to take any place—the season being over—she could find. She got one of those situations well known in Copenhagen, where the food is sweet soup and fritters, and where the servants sleep in a hole that isn't good enough for a lumber room. She began to find her strength failing her, she coughed and brought up

blood, and then they dismissed her.

She went to the waiter. He got her a place in the kitchen of one of the great restaurants. Here it was work from morning till past midnight. She continued to grow worse, but hid it from him. At last she went to him and said she wanted to go home to the brothers—to go home and die in peace.

He looked at her and smoothed his curl, and put his head on one side and screwed up his mouth as a provincial actor does when he has to express profound dejection.

Her face was quite ashen grey, with dark rings under the eyes; and it contrasted curiously with her strongly built figure and handsome features.

“Yes, Anna,” he said, “you look ill—very ill. But I love you—God knows how dearly I love you. Don’t you think that if we were to settle down? . . . There is a cellar I know of in the new quarter that I could get—though I’m not sure I have money enough.”

They talked it over. She looked at the cellar, and he was going to have their banns read. But she grew worse, and they said she must go to the hospital.

She did not like that, she would rather go home. And he did not like that; so he took the cellar, bought some furniture on the hire system, and there she went to bed, and there she lay, and was in a bad way.

They wrote and told Julius. He pondered over the letter one day and went to the town the next.

He found the cellar all right, in a newly-built house, where "Let" was in all the windows, but there were no people as yet. The beershop was not over full either. Hr. Bisserup sat with another man in front of a freshly lacquered bar, in a pensive attitude, with his hand under his chin. He threw himself immediately upon his brother-in-law's neck, thus embarrassing him considerably. Julius did not know whether to laugh outright or not, or where to put his head. So he asked about Anna.

“She is in there, in her room. Mine is over there. Here is your brother, dear girl.”

They stood by the yellow ochre bed, in the dim room where the window was set far up in the wall, and was darkened by all the street dogs as they came running by one after another, each one stopping for a moment to make sure that the panes had not been polished since his last visit. There was a smell of damp walls, of shavings, of medicine. And there lay Anna under a feather quilt in a flowery chintz cover. She gave Julius her hand—such a warm moist hand—and she looked at him, and he at her, and he could think of nothing to say, and so at last he said, “Well, so you’re getting on all right together?”

Hr. Bisserup bent his head and made his voice sound very hollow as he answered:

“I take as much care of her as I can—don’t I, dear girl?”

And into the ex-waiter’s nervous features, with their indescribably artificial expression, there flashed suddenly a momen-

tary touch of real emotion—as real as could ever be expected from such as he—and Anna nodded.

So Julius went away.

The last thing she said to him was, “Give my love to them all at home, and be good to Mussi.” Mussi was the grey cat.

But all the way home Julius thought what a fool he had been, for he had not said what he meant to say, and had said what he had not meant to say at all.

And when Jacob asked him how he had found them, the thought of the shavings and the damp plaster and the medicine came back to him, and the touch of Anna’s hand, and he turned away and answered quickly and decidedly, “Bad.”

But ten minutes later, when he was standing by the boat, he could not help it—he was obliged to laugh, though not aloud. That waiter with his solemn, deep voice, and his embrace, and his fantastic hair was too funny.

That day week Anna was dead.

Hr. Ludvig Bisserup himself came and informed them of it. He was dissolved in tears; he threw himself on the brothers' necks—first on Julius, who was prepared for it, and then on Jacob, who looked ashamed and cross. Then they went round together to pay their respects to all the relations.

The relations received the stranger with a certain reserve; but this would have been the case even if he had not arrived with an eyeglass on his watchcord and his hair arranged so fantastically. They were a little doubtful about the position; how were they to regard him? As a sorrowing widower? They were mostly of opinion that a marriage even at the bedside is a proper observance of forms; but on the other hand—after all Anna was dead. He had only come down to bury her, and for that short time he might very well be considered to belong to the family.

Bisserup noticed it all. The attitude of the Vangaa people hurt his feelings, but he con-

trolled himself. This ill-regulated result of melodramas and circulating libraries sincerely desired to do honour to his dead sweetheart, and he needed the help of her relations.

He opened his mind to Julius. The publican's trade was slack, and there had been many expenses during the illness. Where could he borrow money for the funeral expenses? Because he wished to provide the funeral himself; he had not been willing, he had not been able, to provide a wedding feast—or he had not thought of it.

Julius was accommodating. He told him of his uncle, Post-Johan, an old bachelor who had been a carrier, and who had run to and fro with letter bags and packets till he had run himself into a little house and a nice little sum in the savings bank.

Post-Johan called to mind Münchausen's *dachshund* who began as a greyhound. He had not much leg left, and very little flesh on his bones. His small, red-rimmed eyes almost disappeared in the dismay with

which he heard Bisserup's errand.

"Three hundred kroner¹ to be spent in burying Anna! Why, you couldn't do much more if she were the Queen-mother."

"Anna was worthy of a crown," declaimed Bisserup.

Julius turned away, and put his hand before his mouth.

Post-Johan wriggled about, and screwed his worn-out leg like a corkscrew into the gravel; but he was obliged to yield. Bisserup's eloquence—true or false—was of a kind that quite overcame the little man. Post-Johan himself could not put two sentences together; and the stranger in his eyes was a perfect Demosthenes. Besides, the halo of wealth would in this way encircle the whole family.

They drove Anna out to Vangaa in an ammunition waggon one wet autumn evening. That was the first step.

She was set down in an empty house that stood near the brothers' cottage. Bisserup remained locked up with the coffin

¹ A krone is about one shilling.

the whole night. A light was seen; he was heard knocking, and seen creeping up the walls on a step-ladder. In the morning the large bare room was transformed, with the help of spruce boughs, flags, and melancholy dahlias, into a chapel adorned for some holy day. The coffin stood open, in the middle of the floor, and in the coffin lay Anna yellow as ivory, in a shroud of bluish white, that with its pinked-out pleats and ruffles looked just like glazed paper.

Her hands were folded on her breast, which had not lost its roundness. Her confirmation hymn - book had been placed under her chin. Between the dead fingers was a sprig of ever-green myrtle.

In the course of the morning a carriage brought six musicians from the metropolis. It had rained on the way, and showers were still falling. As they approached Vangaa the musicians took the large cotton wrappers off the key bugles; the flutes were brought out of the breast-

pockets, and the pieces of the bassoon were collected out of the box. The red-nosed conductor on the front seat, blue with cold, nodded, and a chilly funeral march drew all Vangaa, young and old, out of doors and soon over to the house of mourning.

All the relations, all Vangaa, now stood round the coffin. There was a smell of boxwood, of Bavarian beer, of damp clothes. They had eaten and drunk, and now they stood there in a mood half genial, half dispirited, not certain what was to happen next. Hr. Bisserup had it all in his own hands. He had wished it to be so, and it was, after all, his own entertainment. They were all at his service.

The aunts and cousins, neighbours' wives and neighbours' daughters, had already been crying quietly together for a little while, with occasional outbreaks into louder lamentation. Julius and Jacob were exchanging impatient glances.

"Look here, I say," Jacob began to mutter, "it's time we took her——"

At that moment the door into the next room opened; Hr. Ludvig Bisserup stepped over the threshold, walked unsteadily to the coffin with his eyeglasses to his eyes, lifted first one black-gloved hand and then the other, tried to speak, stopped short, and looked round him.

The assembly looked at him. His face was the colour of ivory, like that of the dead before him. Nervousness, genuine emotion, love of theatrical display, a number of complex and contradictory elements were struggling in this weak, worn-out product of a great city that does not deal too kindly with her step-children.

A suppressed giggle from Julius was audible. Then the sorrowing lover began his speech.

“I wished . . . that is, I wished . . . if I could . . . I mean. . . . Excuse me!”

He turned away, let his eyeglass fall, and used his pocket-handkerchief.

“Dear fellow-Chr. . . . dear friends and relations of the dead, we stand by this bier, in a very short time to transfer . . . to ex-

change this corruptible . . . for . . . in short, I mean to say that as many of those now present have had grave doubts about my dear departed bride, I thought it my duty to declare here, in the presence of Death, that my beloved girl was altogether pure and innocent. I take Heaven to witness that she lies here in the bridal bed of Death, a maiden—a maiden, I say, a myrtle blossom, a . . . God help me; I am very miserable. . . . Amen. . . . Water!”

He swayed and reeled; Julius sprang up, caught him, and put him into a chair. There was no water at hand, but they brought him a glass of Bavarian beer, and he gulped down a big draught and wept aloud—a heartrending sound, which was mingled with women’s sobs, while the men, at a sign from Julius, seized the coffin, and nailed it down with the swift, steady stroke of professionals.

“That’s a queer fish,” muttered Jacob. “Don’t let us stand here till we’re half frozen. Come along with her, boys.”

And they carried Anna out and laid her with the wreaths on the cart, and the musicians played and the people fell into their places in the procession, some driving, and some on foot. And Hr. Bisserup sat without an overcoat beside the driver of the cart, drying his eyes continually, till the black gloves made marks on the pale face, while fits of shivering shook the slender frame.

It was a melancholy procession, and very melancholy weather. And as they came to the churchyard, which was a long clay slope where the crosses and railings were stuck like pins in a pincushion, Anna's bearers went sliding along on the greasy mud, while the sky dropped its heavy autumnal tears upon the umbrellas and felt hats and head-kerchiefs as on a troop of mummers.

The priest was standing by the grave. He had been waiting, and had grown impatient—a thing which happens even to priests. A long address had been bespoken, and the honorarium, paid in advance, had been

large in proportion. But the pastor thought all the same that it would be to the advantage of his parishioners if he paid some reasonable regard to the weather.

He began :

“Dear fellow Christians, when we stand by this bier——”

The rain was drumming on the pastor's smart, new, tightly stretched silk umbrella. And it sank lower and lower over him, and his words struggled to find their way out, and all the other umbrellas sank lower, with long streams of water dripping from their points on the procession, and on the churchyard, on the grave, on Anna, on the ex-waiter's love, the one genuine emotion of his life, now being suitably committed to the earth.

Julius glanced out for a moment from under his umbrella. He looked round, and stuck the horn handle into his mouth. He felt as if he would have given ten kroner to the poor for leave to explode, if it were but for a single second.

But then he thought of Anna.

of the cellar, of her last greeting. There was a sharp stab of pain in his left side. He thought it was something else, and pressed the place: but it was in his heart he had felt the stab. Anna was dead, and now they were burying her.

And Post-Johan? He stood and watched Hr. Ludvig Biserup. He saw him grow paler and paler, till he looked like a dying man himself. And Post-Johan gave himself up to unrestrained weeping. He mingled his tears with the tears of Heaven.

Heaven's tears were not shed perhaps for Anna alone; but it is very certain that Post-Johan was weeping for his lost three hundred kroner.



THE CHURCH SHIP.



THE CHURCH SHIP.

THERE sat the three men, old Ole Bertelsen and his two sons, Karl and Kristian, talking softly together — and now and then they stole a glance at Sören, the third brother, whose big fingers were handling some very small matters on board the “ship.”

They were very proud of this ship, so proud that they only spoke of it in whispers. But if they had been questioned about it they would of course have answered as carelessly as if the ship were a matter of perfect indifference to them.

Sören sat with his wooden leg sticking straight out at right angles to the other ; the position

was rather uncomfortable, but that could not be helped. And while the thin bearded face, furrowed with lines of suffering, was bent carefully between the yardarm and the topmast backstay, the big, sunburnt hands, with their finely-formed, delicate fingers, moved about the deck and the rigging, and the large, tranquil eyes held in their depths a secret joy which they were careful not to betray by a single glance.

“I suppose she will soon be put to rights?” asked old Ole Bertelsen, cautiously and respectfully.

Sören was justified in not answering at once. He sat with the ends of two halyards between his teeth; in his fingers he held a little threefold block and now, in the fast waning light of the December day, he was endeavouring to look through the sheaf-hole through which the thin line should run.

He let the thread slip from his teeth and answered another question which had been put to him five minutes before.

“ I have only found one worm-hole in the bottom of her. That’s not bad after a cruise of twenty years.”

“ Not at all,” said Karl, with conviction.

“ Well, but, Sören,” remarked Kristian, “ you poured a pint bottle of oil and turpentine into her that time.”

“ And now we’re going to give her another,” said Sören. “ Twenty years hence, when she puts in again for repairs and we are worm-eaten ourselves and other folk have the handling of her, they shall see anyhow that we did our best for her while we had her.”

“ We may very well be alive ourselves then,” said old Ole. “ It runs in the family.”

Ole was well past his seventieth year, and the sons were all over forty. Twenty years ago Ole and his sons had joined with the other inhabitants of the village in an important undertaking. Every other village along the coast had its ship hanging up in the church—why should Vangaa have none ?

It was just about the time that Sören came home from a long voyage with a wooden leg in place of the leg of flesh and bone that he had started with. He had suffered terribly away in the foreign hospital and in the end the sailor's fortitude had failed him. A good many different sects were represented in the hospital wards, and Sören fell a prey to a fierce man with close-cropped hair and tightly-compressed lips. Fire and pitch and sulphur and other combustibles were rained, metaphorically speaking, upon the weakened cripple, and Sören had come home robbed not only of his natural leg, but also of his natural humour.

From his boyhood he had lived a life of severe self-restraint; he now went about repenting of all the sins in the world. He still had a good deal of physical pain and he was suffering also from the knowledge that now in the flower of his age he must be a burden on others; and these facts made common cause with his newly-awakened scruples.

Overwhelmed with the sense of his sinfulness, he caught eagerly at the chance of working at the ship, that so he might perhaps pay off something of his great and burdensome debt.

The others scraped their pence together to buy the raw materials. Sören resolved to contribute the lion's share of the offering himself. A half-year went by, a half-year of steady, unremitting labour on the frigate; she was christened *The Seaman's Remembrance* and she measured full six feet from her stern to the tip of her jib-boom. When she was quite finished she was carried to the church with great solemnity and hung up there, and the old parson consecrated her in a speech of considerable length, while Sören blew his nose continually with his cotton handkerchief that had the picture of the Fall of Sebastopol on it. And afterwards when the others repaired to the tavern to celebrate the occasion, he limped the half-mile¹ home with his crutch and his stick, wrestling all the way

¹ About $2\frac{1}{4}$ English miles.

with his old enemies, the thoughts that warred continually in his soul. Had he not looked up in the middle of the sermon at the pretty ship, startled by an idea that she was beginning to twist round in the chains where she hung? And through this shock to his vanity had he not missed hearing what the preacher was saying—neglected, in fact, to attend to the preaching of the Word, just because a toy ship was perhaps going to turn round?

Then the scandalous story about the old pastor came out and the burden of Sören's soul grew none the lighter for it. When a public servant is guilty of embezzlement he sets a bad example, but when a clergyman scandalises his parish it is much worse. The majority of the people in a village are tolerably callous, but there are always some tender consciences, like Sören's, that suffer because they cannot perceive the moral that eternally underlies all human weakness and passion. Every day he grew more and more sombre; and he could not, like his

brothers, bury his thoughts with the nets in the deep sea and bring them up again in the form of shining fish.

It was a remark dropped accidentally by his father that first recalled him to an active life. With one good leg and a couple of fists no one was forced to live on other people, Ole had said. Sören blushed, pulled himself together, and set to work. It was from the ship that the first suggestion came. Sören rigged out a new ship, which was put in an exhibition and afterwards bought by an admiral for a chamber of models. Other ships were soon launched ; some went to churches, others to toy-shops. Some sailed on educational voyages, others on pleasure trips. Sören's thoughts sailed away with them ; they no longer stayed at home consuming his strength. They showed him the world in its various forms, and a great universal law behind them all—the moral law and the law of life. Sören turned philosopher, and when the first shock of parting with his old, morbidly

scrupulous views was over, he felt that he had profited by the exchange.

And so twenty years went by. The brothers had long since taken wives to themselves, and now had boys of their own. Sören had made himself a new leg, much better than the old English one that had cost six pounds sterling. He meditated, and he rigged out his boats, he put by a little money and helped his brothers; he was now perhaps the most respected man in the village—and that said something for a man who could not fish.

Since the days of the old parson there had been a whole string of parsons in the parish to which the village belonged. It was a kind of stepping-stone to other livings. The last, a younger man than the rest, had been there a year or two. The clergy are a good deal discussed nowadays. On the one hand they are held to be saints; on the other hypocrites and fools. This young pastor was neither the one nor the other; he was a child, both in his faith and in his

actions. The sickly son of a very learned man, he had cherished from his school-days one intense affection. He loved the sea, he longed to be a sailor. His health put that out of the question, and he took orders. He was an idealist, sincere, dreamy, shy, with a face like a girl. His spiritual calling did not involve him in any radical contradictions; he knew nothing, he desired to know nothing, of Life; if one day he had met her face to face he would have turned aside and have hastened back to his study. There, on his bookshelves, stood a toy ship—a relic of his school-days. He had a silent wife and a little boy; and in the field behind the parsonage was a peat moss, with enough clear water in it to sail the boat. The pastor often wandered there with his little son and the ship, and it was hard to say whether father or son took most pleasure in seeing her sail; it is even possible that the father only took the boy with him for fear of being surprised alone at that occupation.

Every day he walked the half-mile down to the fishing village. He stood looking dreamily out over the sea and he stared at the fishermen and at their boats. One day he had been on the point of taking his ship down with him under his arm to see her sail on the "real" water. At the last moment he had overcome the impulse, but afterwards half regretted it. As far as the theory of the thing went, he could sail a boat or rig out a vessel with any one. He had studied innumerable works on the subject, and he had an uncle, an old sailor, who had taken pleasure in teaching him the technical phraseology. But when he had to speak to the fishermen, his shyness and awkwardness overpowered him. He had withdrawn himself from Life; and Life in turn had withdrawn herself from him.

There were not many churchgoers among the fishermen. Not that there was any want of God-fearing people in Vangaa, but it was contrary to the traditions of the place to go to church ex-

cept on very solemn occasions, when it was, so to speak, inevitable. The few fishermen who went once never went again. They did not understand the pastor. They had nothing against him; it soon became known that he was an extremely generous man, as far as his small means permitted, and very easily taken in; and the more worthless members of the community levied contributions freely upon him; but they did not go to church any the more for that.

He himself could not understand it. He worked at his sermons with the greatest care; he was the only child of a very learned man, and he was thoroughly well educated. Sometimes, especially in the beginning of his ministry there, his eyes, after vainly searching the floor for a congregation, would fasten themselves on the ship which hung in her chains from the roof in front of him. They dwelt upon her with childlike pleasure; she had even diverted his thoughts from his exposition, and he had

sometimes had to recollect himself suddenly lest he should lose the rather fine-spun thread of his discourse altogether. The ship was really too pretty.

But in the last six months he had observed certain infirmities in the spars and rigging. He spoke of it to the schoolmaster and to the sexton, and to other people up in the little inland town; they could not give him any advice, they were indeed scarcely aware of the ship's existence, although she hung there plainly visible to the whole community, full six feet long, with little dusty sailors manning her rigging, and a flag at the masthead.

Late in the autumn a deputation from Vangaa was announced at the parsonage.

Sören, the spokesman of the party, limped in at the study door on his crutch. His brother Karl and another fisherman followed.

The pastor was very much embarrassed; he blushed and stammered as he asked the reason of the visit, and then

Sören became embarrassed also, and he stammered and hesitated too, and Karl tried to explain but stopped in the middle, and at last they managed to say that on the Sunday before Christmas it would be twenty years since the ship had been hung up, and now they would like to take her down and thoroughly overhaul her; and on the Sunday before Christmas they would hang her up again; and perhaps the pastor would give her his blessing and make a little sermon about her when the regular church service was over.

“You see, Hr. Pastor,” the spokesman remarked in conclusion, “it is with ships just as it is with living men. When they have gone on for twenty years and a few days, the cordage gets slack and the spars crooked and dust gathers in the corners. And we fisher-folk don’t understand the art of cleaning men, but it’s another thing with a boat, and one that we have all had a hand in, and that I myself, Sören Olsen, rigged out—though I shouldn’t say so.”

The young pastor blushed more than ever; he looked at Sören and answered—

“I—I have certainly noticed myself that the ship needed repairs. There is a crack in the fore-topmast crosstrees—she is a good deal damaged.”

Sören stared in amazement at the slender young pastor; then he glanced at the others as if to say—

“Did you hear that? Fore-topmast crosstrees!”

And indeed it sounded as strange in the fishermen’s ears as the fishermen talking Hebrew would have sounded in the ears of the clergyman.

So Sören prepared to take his departure.

“Well, then, if the Hr. Pastor is willing——”

The pastor nodded.

“You do your part; I will do mine.”

And so the three great hands were stretched out one after another, and the pastor’s small hand was grasped three times, and each of the fishermen said, “Many thanks, Hr. Pastor.”

So the deputation went away. But at the door Sören turned round and pointed at the pastor's toy ship.

"Excuse my boldness, but my eye just happened to fall on her. I thought that perhaps she too would be the better for being dry-docked, and if the pastor has no objection, I would willingly . . . some time in Christmas week."

"Will you really?" said the pastor, very much pleased. "You are a good man."

"Ah, no," answered Sören, thoughtfully. "I am only three parts of a man, . . . and there has never been but One good."

"That was spoken like a Christian," said the pastor.

"It was spoken like a man," replied Sören; but he said it very softly.

It was the Sunday before Christmas. In the early morning light Sören stood considering his work. There stood the frigate on the big stool on which she was to be carried by long poles. The sails were set and

on the deck shone the twelve brass cannon, the little sailors in their blue shirts swarmed up the rigging, and the smartest of captains with gold braid on his cap stood on the quarter-deck, and the flag waved over him from the gaff, and at the main-masthead floated a white pennant with the plain inscription on it, *The Seaman's Remembrance*. And outside the room stood the whole youth of the village, pressing their noses flat against the pane and could not see anything inside after all.

So the clock struck eleven, and the men carried the ship as carefully as if she had been made of glass out of the room and up the road to the church. And the whole fishing population gathered round her, some in high hats and some in low hats, and there was a bugle and two clarionets and an accordion, and the women and the girls brought up the rear, and the boys ran on in front shouting "hurrah!" and then ran back again to have another look at the ship.

The service was over but the

townspeople still remained in their places. The church was decorated with young fir-trees and the pulpit was wreathed with evergreens. It felt really like Christmas. And so the procession with the ship came marching in with measured steps. The chain was lowered from the roof, and Sören and his old father made it fast amidships to a small ring that was screwed into the deck.

“It ought really to have been an iron bar,” whispered Sören to the old man.

“Is there a cross in the hawse?” asked Ole.

“I don’t think so,” answered Sören; “but suppose she begins to turn?”

“She will steady herself again,” said Ole.

And so the ship was hung up, and everybody could see the copper sheathing of her keel, and the gilt figure-head, and the guns that looked out of every port-hole; there was not an eye in the church that did not see it all.

The preacher stood in the pul-

pit ; he was very pale, he had spent half the night working at his sermon. But now as he stood there, the words that he had painfully gathered and arranged went from him. There hung the pretty ship ; he was afraid to look at her lest he looked at her too long ; and there below, gazing up at him, were all those new faces—all the fishermen were there with their wives and children. The church had never been so full before and he was quite bewildered with the thought that he must speak to all these people who had never been there before and perhaps would never come again.

Then the fragrance of the fir-trees floated towards him ; it was the Christmas fragrance, a scent every priest knows well. He folded his hands, looked down, looked up again, and then began. He spoke of grace, of grace from above, of the Church's means of grace, of a king who holds the helm of state, of a greater King who holds the helm of the world. But when he was about to connect this helm with

the helm of the ship he lost his thread, and had to begin with grace all over again.

There was a little significant movement on the floor of the church. The pastor looked down, and then he looked up at the ship—she was turning very slowly round. He paused and swung back, and the preacher stopped short and used his pocket-handkerchief. Then he got hold of another thread.

He discussed the exact meaning of the expression, "The Ship of the Church." It was an expression about which all students were not agreed. Probably the Greek word *ναοσ* had been misapprehended, possibly mistaken for the word *ναυσ*. And he was beginning to get very deep indeed when the ship again turned in her chain.

The preacher was quite put out and the stir below him grew greater. The preacher gazed at the ship, which had steadied herself again and on the pennant at the mainmast he read the words, *The Scaman's Remembrance*.

And then suddenly it was as if a little light had broken in upon him, perhaps a true ray of Christmas sunshine. There beneath him sat all these people, looking up at him with a strange questioning in their eyes. They had not come here to hear about the Church's means of grace, or their own sins, or about Greek words and idioms. They were poor tired people, who worked hard on the sea and on the strand; they were all, old and young alike, only children and here they had brought their childish gift. They had offered themselves with their ship,—it was their life that was hanging there, the rough seafaring life that goes on in storm and calm, in the cold nights and the fresh days. In their simplicity they had brought their gift to the Church, and how could the Church express her thanks for it otherwise than by impressing on them the Church's best word: brotherly love, brotherly union, in the hard stress of life, and under the inscrutable decrees of Providence?

And so the words formed themselves involuntarily on the preacher's lips. He forgot his learned exposition, his carefully-prepared sermon: for the first time in his life he spoke extempore. He used words familiar to his audience; he spoke of tides and currents and anchorage, and of the great Captain who would one day call all hands on deck. And when at the closing Amen he looked down at his congregation, all eyes were wet; and when he looked up again the ship was hanging as steady and as quiet as if there had never been a cross in her hawse.

Outside Sören waited for the minister.

"Many thanks, Hr. Pastor," said the philosopher, "many thanks."

"Are you satisfied?" asked the preacher very gently.

"Yes; you got a breeze at last. It seemed a bit difficult at first, but we see now that you're one of us after all."

On Christmas Day the whole village went to church again. They said they only went to look

at the ship ; but fishermen are sometimes very deep.

The day after Christmas Sören took the pastor's toy boat home for repairs.



A ROMANCE OF THE DOWNS.



A ROMANCE OF THE DOWNS.

THE equinoctial gales were beginning, and always at this time an old man might be seen standing on the lee side of the house, peering round the corner and muttering to himself, while his trembling fingers clutched at his lambskin cap or twisted themselves in and out of the torn button-holes of his jacket.

He was raging at the weather; or perhaps it was not exactly the weather that he was angry with, for every West Jutlander knows what a fruitless quarrel that is. In his West Jute patois, but with a distinctly Norwegian accent, he growled and muttered and threatened and complained.

“The rascals,” he cried, “the rascals! The wicked, heartless wretches! They look after their own, that they do, but they don’t trouble about poor folk’s children, . . . they let them be crushed and drowned; . . . they don’t look after the wheel, they don’t look after the oars. Give me back my boys, you villains, give me back my boys!”

He shouted and threatened and wailed as if vying with the wind which swept round the gable of the house and shook the tottering figure, while the old man, who had passed a few years beyond the allotted three-score and ten, gathered up the failing forces of a strong, unyielding will, and fought fiercely against the storm. No weather should prevent him from looking down the deep cleft in the grey downs, through which he could see where a line of surf, appearing for a moment and vanishing again behind a strip of land, bore witness that this was the reign of the equinox, the evil time for unfortunate men out on the open sea and among the reefs,—bore

witness and straightway was gone.

His voice grew gradually weaker and weaker; the feeble figure swayed more and more. The storm was getting the best of it. It pressed up through the deep dent in the downs, up through the desolate ravine, where on either side of the steep banks a few houses were dotted here and there; and hurled itself against the gabled wall with the sudden hollow sound of distant artillery. The gabled wall stood firm, but the old man was flung back against the corner, and struggled, half blinded by the sand, towards the door. A woman had opened it for him, and stood on the threshold quietly waiting to offer his failing strength a well-tryed support.

No one could have told that she took his arm for this purpose. It was done so casually, so quietly. She led him through the small paved entry into the room where for a generation back the bed and the chest of drawers and the red-painted table had stood in the same

places. The two exchanged no word; but when he had been put into a chair and she had taken off his cap and set a mug of milk before him, he began to nod and fumble with his fingers, and while he tried to recover his breath, which he had lost in the wind, he gasped out, "Sara, the book—take out the book."

She went to the chest of drawers and took out a book in a mouse-eaten leather binding with gilt edges; then, sitting down exactly opposite to him, she held the book at arm's length—so long-sighted was she—and, opening it at hazard, began to read aloud, verse after verse, period after period, without pause, in a perfectly monotonous voice, while the wind whined outside like a dog begging to be let in.

The old man's stubbly chin sank lower and lower on his breast; his fingers were still working, as if the anger in his heart was still struggling with the apathy of fatigue, but gradually his hands ceased their convulsive movements and dropped quietly on to his knee. The

woman bent forward with her ear to his mouth. He was whispering, "Sara, it is bad weather, . . ." She read one more period. He whispered again, "Sara, . . . the boys, the boys! . . ." She raised her head and read in a rather louder voice; then, pausing, she looked at him again, and saw that he was asleep.

She rose noiselessly, put down the book, undressed the old man, lifted him on to the bed and covered him up, drank the milk in the mug, and then paused in front of the chest of drawers. On the wall above hung three photographs, each surrounded by a little wreath of yellow everlastings. They were all portraits of young seamen, evidently brothers, the eldest in a naval uniform, the two others in a fisherman's usual Sunday dress. The clothes had all been painted a bright blue colour, and the youthful chins, whether bearded or not, were decorated with red.

The woman stood and contemplated them. She put one straight in its wreath, rubbed a flymark here and there off the

glass and felt the small nails in the rings of the simple frames to see if they were firm. It was all done very quietly, very deliberately, without making a sound. Presently she turned and glanced at the bed, and then, taking down one of the pictures, she held it a little while in her hand some distance from her and hung it up again.

She went out into the kitchen and began to break up some bundles of heather, which she put on the fire, under the coffee-kettle. Now and then she went to the door and listened, in case the old man should be calling her. Then she fell into thought again, and again remembered to listen to the old man, Kren Normand.

Her name was Sara. She had been Kren Normand's ¹ wife for thirty years. She was on the wrong side of fifty, as much beyond the half century as he beyond the threescore years and ten. They lived together here in the dip of the downs over against the sea. A few scattered houses

¹ The Norwegian's.

and an old farmstead lay higher up in the cleft where the cultivated land began. Down here nothing grew but potatoes, and scanty pasture for a couple of sheep. Anything else that was needed must come from the beach and the sea. For many years the old man had not been to sea at all, but it was said that he had a little laid by from earlier days. A few pounds is a good deal here in this part of the world, where forest and fruitful field and meadow and peat moss are traditions, sonorous legends which the children of the downs like to hear, as we like to hear of sandal-wood and gold-dust and Persian carpets.

The men of the downs live and die on the same spot—unless they chance to perish at sea. That happens occasionally. Sometimes they are lost in an effort to save their neighbours' lives and goods out on the reef where the ship has struck. It is often at the risk of their lives that they leave the fishing ground in their small, frail boats, and make for the shore in a

sudden squall, or at some unexpected turn of the tide. Below the landing-place the slightest error is fatal. The breakers here are greedy; every year in their fierce, rough way they demand a prey. But not only are the reefs and the breakers and the landing dangerous. If you stand up here on the downs and look out into the open sea with a good glass, you may see a stately vessel flung by the fury of the hurricane, weakened or utterly disabled, to the waves, her heavily-armed yet rapid pursuers, never to rise again. In this way ship and crew may disappear together, and no Shipping Gazette can say why or where. Such a vessel may, of course, weather the storm, thanks to a clever builder and a good captain, but even then it sometimes happens that a sea, in revenge, washes a man away, or a swinging boom knocks him overboard, and there is nothing to gain by complaining afterwards of the skipper or the helmsman, whose carelessness caused the misfortune. Equally useless would it be to write articles in

the *Shipping Gazette* about it; useless, too, even if anything came of the articles; for lost is lost, and if an admiral's son had gone down in that fashion, neither skipper nor owner could bring him back again.

To be born here on the downs, where there is neither forest nor fruitful field, nor peat moss, nor meadow, is to be born, as it were, under the hard law of necessity. If it was a fishing village, one could join with others, buy implements and go out on expeditions together. But here there are only two or three white boats, and two or three houses, with a few lean sheep, a bit of scanty pasture, and a potato patch. The boys are accustomed from childhood to go out in the crazy old boat to get what they can. Then the time comes when they go into the navy, and afterwards they begin to earn money. When they are not hindered on the way they always come home again, faithful to that strip of sand, to these downs, looking danger constantly in the face, one generation after

another proving what habit and will united can make of human life.

But life here is not soft and easy and smooth and pleasant. In these small cottages it is hard and sombre and introspective.

Kren Normand had three sons. He himself had begun at an early age to take life seriously. His father was master of a small sloop that traded to Norway. The boy was born over at Christianssand, and as soon as he could stand on deck he went to and fro with his father. It was the Englishman's time, the war time, and the sloop was chased and captured here in shore. Father and son went to prison, and then were exchanged: went to sea again and were shipwrecked here on the same coast.

It was as though this bit of beach were determined to have the boy. The father was left out yonder on the reefs; the son came ashore. The people on the downs christened him Kren, and he got work at the farm; but he spent more time among the boats on the beach than among the

sheep in the fold. Small, tough, sinewy, enduring, sharp-sighted, with an absolute contempt for personal danger, and a keen eye to personal advantage, he was always ready for anything, fishing or salvage; and before the year was out he was known as much perhaps for his surly, silent ways as for his skill in steering a boat, for five miles up and down the coast.

He soon married a girl who was not very young and who owned half a house. Her brother, who owned the other half, perished one winter night in a snowstorm on the beach. He was blinded and blown out to sea; the breakers seized him, and did not give him back for days after.

Kren Normand was left with his wife and the house, and they had three sons, one soon after another.

These three sons were the father's pride. Silent and introspective as he was, there was a flash of pleasure in his eyes when they were out with him in the boat and he saw how smartly

they obeyed his brief words of command, how truly they were his own flesh and blood.

The boys ate a good deal; they had to work hard, and they did work hard. Kren Normand taught his sons all he knew himself and they grew up and developed, each with his own special character, but all three bold and experienced seamen.

The eldest, Jörgen, was perhaps the one who most closely resembled his father as he had been in his younger days, somewhat silent, resolute, always ready to go out of his way if anything was to be got by it. He was slight and tall; the other two, Karl and Johan, were shorter, more compactly built.

Jörgen went into the navy, and came home again, wearing the king's uniform. There was a dance on Shrove Monday at the solitary farmhouse on the downs. Kren Normand did not like any amusements, dancing least of all, but Jörgen went all the same.

The next Sunday he took the farmer's servant girl out for a

walk. She was called Sara, she had no parents and was scarcely more than a child, with smooth dark hair and large wondering eyes, that evidently loved to rest upon the smart young man-of-war's man, although he had not half as much to say for himself as his brother Karl, who accompanied the pair a little way over the downs.

So it went on for several Sundays.

One day, when the father was down in the boat with Jörgen, he said—

“ You go out walking with the servant girl over yonder ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What's her name ? ”

“ Sara.”

“ She has a pretty face. You don't mean her any harm ? ”

“ I never dreamt of such a thing. We are betrothed.”

“ Stuff ! ” growled the father. “ You can go home now, but not to the farm. I'll take the boat out alone to-day.”

This was what Kren always did when anything had displeased him. He rowed out with short,

angry strokes: the sea soothed and quieted him after a time.

Jörgen and his father spoke no more of the matter. When the spring came, Jörgen went away to join his ship.

One day late in the autumn, Kren came up from the boat and went up across the downs. Under one of the sandhills he stood still, listened, crept cautiously up towards the top, bent a tuft of lyme-grass aside, and looked down.

There sat the servant girl. Karl stood erect at her side and was handing her a letter. She took it, looked into it, and looked up again at Karl.

"Would you like me to go away now?" he asked the girl.

She nodded and he pressed her hand a moment and went.

The father lay still in the grass till the son was out of sight, then he let himself slip down to the girl's side.

She gazed at him in terror, and tried to hide the letter. He caught her arm and held it firmly.

"That is from Jörgen? I

thought so. But you may as well put him out of your mind."

"Never!" said she, and began to cry.

"It may be many years before he is able to keep you; and in the meantime you only go about fretting and neglecting your work. You had better go home and see to it; but first give me the letter."

In her terror she gave it to him, and got up and ran off.

He looked after her, peeped into the letter, looked after her again, read the letter, and put it away beside his tobacco-pouch. Then he went home, called Karl, and looked at him with his keen eyes.

"Next time you get a letter from your brother you are to give it to me and not to the girl over yonder. Do you understand?"

At Christmas time the boys' mother died. She had been ailing for a long time and had been in bed for the last year. Her death was therefore not unexpected; the youngest son, Johan, was the one who showed

most feeling, both during her last hours and at the funeral. And so Kren Normand was left alone in the house with his two sons.

With the spring equinox there came tidings of Jörgen, which were soon after confirmed by a letter from the captain. During a gale in the North Sea, while a sail was being reefed, Jörgen had been struck by the boom, or had fallen from the yard-arm; it was not exactly clear which had happened, but one thing was certain, that Jörgen was dead.

When this blow fell upon Kren Normand he was a strong man still, in the prime of life. But the blow was a hard one; the tears ran down into his rough beard; the whole of that day and the next he sat by the red-painted table, pressing the knuckles of his right hand into the palms of his left, and muttering, "The wretches, the wretches! What sort of skipper is that? What sort of helmsman is that? My boy, my boy!"

He made Karl, who was the

cleverest at the pen, write a long letter at his dictation. It was sent away, but never answered.

The summer came and went. Kren went out alone in the boat. The two sons had saved up their money, and had bought a Norwegian *pram*, in which they went fishing together.

One summer day Kren met Sara on the beach. As soon as she saw him she would have turned to escape, but something held her back; she stood still, and putting her apron up to her face began to sob. He stood still also. Then he went close up to her and said, "It was your fault. You took my boy away from me."

"Don't say that," she pleaded.

He raised his hand, and swung it as if he would have liked to strike her. "It was your fault," he repeated, in a hoarse voice, and the words seemed to come with difficulty—"your fault—hussy that you are!"

"Strike me, strike me!" she sobbed. "I haven't deserved it, but perhaps it'll do some good."

He looked at her doubtfully,

as if, against his will, he saw her meaning. He turned round and went growling away.

At Christmas time Karl informed his father that he was keeping company with Sara. The old man did not answer. The son waited anxiously for a moment, and then went on: "Have you nothing to say to me, father?"

"You didn't wait to ask my leave," said Kren.

"I didn't dare," said Karl, softly.

The old man sat still for a little while, and then he growled out, "Can she forget Jörgen so soon?"

"She says she never remembers Jörgen when she sees me. And you see I am alive. . . ."

The old man was scraping a wooden peg with his knife; he made a deep cut into the wood and replied, "You can do as you please."

"May she come here?"

"No."

The next spring equinox brought many wrecks to the shore. Kren Normand and his

sons worked hard. Karl worked as much as any two or three; he wanted to show what he was fit for. The severe labour, with its proportionately good wages, brought them all into more sociable relations again. On one of these wet trips Johan got ague, and he had to stay in bed. When the old man was out of the way, Sara went up to the house and looked after the patient; there was no service she would not gladly render that family, and there was no other womanly help to be had there. They were very saving people at Kren Normand's.

The people who lived in the few scattered houses here on the downs had at last learnt to join together in a community which hired a big flat-bottomed boat and bought the largest of the wrecks, a heavily-laden steamer, that lay on the farthest reef—a good haul for these poor men, if only the weather held up. The weather did not hold up. One afternoon the wind rose and the sea became rough. The men on the wreck were not all of the same

mind ; some wanted to go ashore at once, among them Kren Normand, who thought that this trip they should content themselves with half a boatload. Others insisted on taking the whole load, and they persuaded Karl to stay. The flat-bottomed boat was crushed against the broken side of the ironclad steamer. A boat put out from the shore to their assistance, but several men were missing, and were never seen again. Karl was among them.

Kren Normand was carried unconscious up to his house. Johan lay burning with fever, and was scarcely aware that another was laid on the bed beside him. Sara was in the room. Two men needed her help, and her own grief was silenced.

When a woman, struck by some sudden sorrow, finds herself by a sick bed, where she can follow the instinct with which Nature has honoured her sex, let man be ever so self-willed and hard, her instinct will overpower all other emo-

tions, and leave her no room for thoughts of self.

Kren Normand thought of his two sons when he was able to be about again. They had been the pride and joy of his heart; they had moreover shared his daily labour. Everything is reckoned here on the downs; it is a necessity. A man may love his children and still be well aware how much they are worth in the battle of life.

He now set all his affection and all his hope for the future on the youngest, on Johan. He himself had grown suddenly old; he felt it. He was seized with a continual desire to sit on a sand-hill, staring and muttering and digging holes and pulling at the lyme-grass, while all the time he gazed down at the grey-white beach where no comfort was, and at the rolling breakers which bore witness that the equinox was past, or that the equinox was coming—always the equinox.

At home in the house Sara went in and out. It had become a regular thing.

When father and son rose again from their sick beds and realised what they had lost, they felt too that they had gained something in exchange. Nothing was ever said about it; but the girl, with her sweet face, gentle rather than bold, and sparing of her words, came and went, and finally put the garret-room in order and took the management of the little household into her own hands. It had been sadly neglected.

Kren Normand spoke to her very seldom, and never of his sons. Once he came upon her looking at an old letter with tears in her eyes; and it then occurred to him that she had lost something too. The family lived wholly apart from the rest of the world. But a woman who has loved will now and then feel a longing to recall this or that, if only in a few lingering words. It was Johan whom she made her confidant—Johan, the lad of her own age, gentler and softer in his disposition than the other two, who was still so childish at times that he was

as a child to her, and she a mother to him.

The old man noticed—at first with a sharp pang in his heart—how the two young people drew gradually nearer to each other. But he could not now do without Sara; and when he set himself to consider if it was not possible after all to do without her, he was so overwhelmed with perplexity and he felt himself so broken down, so unfit to think it all out, that he let the matter pass and the time pass, and everything in the world pass, because he had grown too small and weak to resist them; too weak even to resist himself.

One summer day he was sitting out on the downs, looking idly through the cleft out over the sea. There had been a stiff breeze blowing during the night and the previous day; it had fallen a little, but the rollers still thundered on the reefs and filled his ears with the old song that always lay behind all sunny days and pleasant weather. Jörgen and Karl were the names that the rolling seas tossed to

and fro among the reefs where the tide ran strong. Why should he sit there and be an old man? Why should youth die? There was Johan, and there was Sara at home—Sara with her gentle, serious eyes. They could not be fixed on Johan at that moment anyhow, because he was at sea with some of the downs men in the Norwegian *pram*. But when he came home Sara would be there. . . .

The old man drew a long breath, and dug his heels into the sand. Was he jealous of Sara, unwilling that she should have his son—the only one that was left to him? Was he jealous of his son, unwilling that he should have the joy of having Sara? He sat and watched the Norwegian *pram*, now coming in—a tiny shell, out over the farthest reef. Suddenly the shell was gone, as a tuft of thistle-down vanishes in the infinite blue air.

He did not shriek: he uttered a moan like an animal that feels the knife. His blood ran suddenly cold, as if the dead had

risen and touched him, and so he rolled down the sandhill, staggered again on to his legs, ran in a frenzy along the beach, where no boat was to be found because the accident with the wreck of the steamer had robbed the beach of its last boat.

All that day and that night and the next day a little, bent, grey man, followed by a young woman, went up and down looking for a corpse on the beach. With dumb, watchful tenderness they sought continually for the dead.

And they found him a long, long way off, where the tide had carried him out and another tide had brought him in to shore again. With the same dumb tenderness, without any word of lamentation, they laid him on a wheelbarrow, and pushed and dragged it alternately the long way home through the soft sand, where the wheel sank deeply in, wailing and wailing as mournfully as a sand-piper under the heavy dead weight.

This is a romance of the

downs ; it ends, like most romances, with a wedding. The people on the downs talked about it a good deal, and said it was odd of Sara to marry the old man after she had been the sweetheart of all his three sons.

But the people on the downs—and a good many others—think and speak generally as if there were only one kind of love. And in reality there are many.



ROUND CAPE HORN.



ROUND CAPE HORN.

HIS name was Hans ; but he was also called The Vagabond, and this name suited him certainly better than his clothes, for they were an odd medley, picked up in markets and pawnshops all over the world.

He lived at home with his father ; he ate the old man's bread, and wore out his clothes—those at least that were not worn out already. He did nothing except play with his favourite comrade, a short-necked cur called Munter.

“That dog,” he said, “is wiser than any two men. He is so wise that he says nothing. If he did he might come out

with a lot of nonsense, just as I have done sometimes myself when I have been in company; and it is much better to hold your tongue."

"Ah, well," said the old man—he was troubled about his son and very proud of him at the same time—"you needn't bother yourself about that. Tell us again how you sailed three times round Cape Horn."

And the father winked at the son, and the son winked back; and then Hans proceeded.

"The story begins—no, first, I ought to say that I started from Hamburg. The old man here wanted to get rid of me, and all the others jeered at me; and so I swore that they should not see me again until I had been three times round Cape Horn. We signed on at Hamburg, and the ship was a barque, and the old man on board—I mean the captain—was a bigger ass than most.

"I turned up at the office with the rest of the crew, and Munter was with me.

“ ‘Is—that your dog?’ asked the owner, in German.

“ ‘Yes,’ said I, in Danish. ‘At your service.’ And no more was said. But when we went on board the captain asked me—

“ ‘Is that your dog?’

“ ‘Yes, he is,’ said I; ‘and his name is Munter.’

“ ‘Pitch him ashore,’ said he.

“ ‘Not if I know it,’ said I.

“ And that was how it began. There was no time to lose, and men were scarce. Riff-raff could be got, certainly, but not decent fellows. And so Munter stayed on board, and so did I.

“ The captain was an ass; the first mate was an old woman; the second mate was a countryman of mine; and the food was first-rate. That was all that concerned me. Munter took care to keep forward. He was very wise; he never showed himself aft at all.

“ As soon as we were well out to sea it came out that we were bound for Jamaica.

“ ‘That is south of Cape Horn, I suppose?’ said I to the second mate.

“He had a hare-lip, and showed his back teeth and they looked quite white as he answered—

“ ‘Not exactly.’

“ ‘All right,’ said I, ‘then I shall leave the ship. Because I am bound for Cape Horn.’

“ ‘Oh, you’ll stay with us a bit longer,’ said he.

“And so we came to Kingston, in Jamaica. Here the governor kept his eye upon me; but I did my work, and Munter minded his own business; and he had no call to kick the dog. But he did it all the same in a vile way; and so I caught up a bucket and let fly at him, and there he lay on the deck.

“ ‘You shall pay for this,’ cried he.

“ ‘All right. Let us square our accounts straight away,’ said I.

“But he had no small change, and so he had the yawl lowered, and rowed ashore.

“ ‘Look out,’ whispered the second mate to me. ‘You will get into the “money-box” for this.’

“The yawl came alongside

again and three constables came on board. I was to go ashore under arrest.

“Munter wanted to come too, but the three chaps swore in English that they had no warrant to arrest the dog. So the poor beast had to stay behind, though he howled piteously. But the mate promised me that he would look after him, and he thought too it would all come right if I would only not be too obstinate.

“‘What did he kick the dog for?’ said I. ‘The beast has a much better heart than he has—the old rope’s end—and three times as much sense.’

“‘You keep quiet,’ said the mate; and so we rowed ashore.

“As soon as we landed they put me in the money-box. It was a large room, with wooden benches and a stone floor, and some spittoons, and the worst lot of dirty Spaniards, and Englishmen, and girls that ever I saw—and I have seen a good many.

“They could all talk bad English and so could I. And one

asked me what I had stolen, and a girl wanted to know how many men I had done for. But I threw myself down on a bench, and as we had neither bite nor sup, except what we happened to have with us, it was not at all amusing. And so the night passed.

“The next day I was brought before a judge; and there was the captain and the consul and a crowd of people who looked as if they were going to hang me right off.

“The judge read something out of a big document that I did not understand a single word of; and then he asked me if I was willing to pay three pounds.

“‘Blest if I am,’ said I.

“‘Would I rather go to prison?’

“‘No, I would rather go on board and look after a dog I had, called Munter.’

At this they all laughed together, and this made me angry, and I told the judge that the captain was an ass and he had kicked my dog, which was a perfectly harmless animal; and that I had never wanted to come to

Jamaica at all, but meant to go round Cape Horn; and that I had got a thrashing all ready, and was only waiting a chance to give it.

“The captain turned scarlet with passion but the others did not understand much of what I had said. And then the consul interfered and it was settled about the three pounds, and I was to pay two shillings besides, because I had spent the night in the black hole.

“‘Wait a bit,’ thought I to myself. So I went with the old fellow down to the harbour and I offered to carry the big document that he had under his arm. But he squinted at me and said that I might drop it into the water and that would be a sin, because it was a fine book; and the next time I kicked up a row it would all be put in the book, and I should be sent ashore in iron bracelets.

“I waited till we came to a place where no one could hear us, and then I whispered between my teeth, keeping on close beside him all the time—

“ ‘ You Low German ape—yes, you can stare at me as much as you like ; but I’ll knock you into next week if you ever come near my dog again, or try to screw three pounds out of a poor sailor’s wages.’

“ He wriggled about a bit but did not say a word ; and when we came on board he went straight into the cabin.

“ I went forward into the fore-castle, and there Munter nearly eat me up for joy. So I hailed the cook who was always a good friend to the dog and me ; and he told me that if I waited a little he would get me some good green soup with meat-balls in it, and some meat. So I took out my concertina and sat down and played all the tunes I knew ; and Munter stood by me and gave tongue every time I changed the tune, exactly as if he had been a man, and knew the songs of his own country.

“ ‘ Then the first mate came along, and asked me from the captain if I was willing to work.

“ ‘ I am working as hard as I

can,' said I, and started off with 'The Island's Staff.' Then he asked if I would come and speak to the captain in the cabin.

"I went down, and there were both the mates and the captain, and he had the paper spread out before him; and he handed me a pen and asked me if I would sign it as agreeing to give up a month's pay, because I refused to work.

"I looked at the pen and answered that I wrote very badly.

"'You can put your mark to it, anyhow,' said he, with his sweet grin.

"'So I can,' said I; and I took the ink-bottle and held it upside down over the document. 'Now it's receipted,' said I.

"'And now you go to gaol,' said he.

"And so the yawl was lowered again; but first I went to the cook, and had a good meal of soup and meat to keep me going, and Munter had the bones and the gristle, and then the three myrmidons of the law came over the side.

“The dog jumped into the yawl with us as we put off, and I promised I would damage the whole lot of them if they did not let Munter come with me. And so they marched me up to the fort; and there was a set of rascals, drawn up in a row; and we were all handcuffed in couples, and the man that was fastened to my wrist was a tall, yellow mulatto.

“‘You’re a pretty scarecrow,’ said I to him and gave the chain a bit of a jerk that made him stagger.

“‘Where are we bound for now?’

“‘Spanishtown,’ said he, taking a squint at the dog, who kept close by me, in spite of the soldiers frightening him.

“‘Keep your eyes to yourself,’ said I. ‘You’re a precious lean chap, and you look as if you’d like to eat the dog, and not just out of affection either.’

“So we came to a railway station and there we were hurried into some open waggons just like cattle-trucks, and there Munter and I were parted.

“And I had a drive of five-and-twenty miles gratis with all these scoundrels. But I did not take much notice of them, because I was troubled at having lost my best friend. And I thought how the poor beast would run about hunting for me and die of hunger. And I gave the scarecrow a knock or two, because I had to relieve my feelings somehow. We drove frightfully slow—on purpose, I suppose, to bother us—and it was desperately hot; and when at last we stopped, who should I see come panting after me but Munter, with his tongue hanging out. I threw myself flat on the ground, and pulled the scarecrow down with me; and I kissed the dusty beast—I mean the dog—on the nose, and we were sworn friends for ever and ever.

“Our irons were then taken off and we were driven into a big yard, and when a soldier wanted to turn Munter out, the dog flew fair at his face, and the officer laughed and said he might stay where he was.

“Then we were put into uniform, and a very neat dress it was. Trousers and blouse of sacking, and a red woollen cap, and down the back and along the legs there was written in plain letters, ‘Santa Maria, District Prison, Spanishtown.’ Munter scarcely knew me in this turn-out, but I talked to him in Danish, and that made it right.

“They were long months, those two, and if it had not been for the dog I think I would have gone for one of the sentinels and let him shoot me. But when you have something in the world to care for, you have to keep yourself in hand. And first they wanted me to break stones, hard flints; but I explained to them that a sailor has very delicate hands; and when they thrust a hammer into my fist all the same, I went at the heap of stones so hard that a bit of flint flew up at one of the thief-catchers and knocked a front tooth out.

“‘Very sorry,’ said I; ‘but now you can see for yourself I

haven't the right sort of fingers for this work.'

"And so it was with everything they gave me to do. I was to wash the rascals' clothes, but I tore the old sacking to bits. Then I was set to clean the place we slept in, and I spilt the water over the flags and the walls, and took a whole heap of sacking and put a stick in it and dragged it over the floor. Then they left me at last in peace with the dog. But we both nearly died of hunger, for they gave the dog nothing at all and I only had a bowl of mush in the morning and a morsel of meat as big as the cork of a beer bottle for supper; and when this was divided between two of us it was starvation for both.

"At last we were let out and came back to Kingston, and there were six pounds waiting for me at the Consulate, and the ship had long since sailed away.

"Munter and I first had a good square meal, and then I asked the Consul if he couldn't get me a job.

“ ‘Where do you want to go?’ he asked.

“ ‘Well,’ said I, looking at Munter, ‘we meant to go round Cape Horn.’

“ ‘You can’t do that this time,’ said he. ‘But there is a ship going back to Hamburg; will that do?’

“ I looked at the dog, and he looked at me and barked. It was exactly as if he had said—

“ ‘Oh, never mind; we can go round Cape Horn any time.’

“ And so I agreed, and so we came to Hamburg.

“ Then Munter and I went ashore, and the first thing I did was to spend some money on a new suit of clothes, handsome blue serge, and a pair of boots with elastic sides, and a round hat. I also bought a collar with a brass lock for Munter but he did not care about it. So I gave it away the first evening to a girl from Hamborgerberg. For the first few days all went merrily enough and Munter used to follow me whenever I went out of the lodgings where we lived. But one evening I

spoke a little too rudely to my comrade, and so he stayed at home and he looked at me, and shook his ears and curled himself round like a ball of wool and then would not look at me any more.

“And one day I found him lying there and shivering all over as if he had an ague. I had promised to meet a girl at a dancing saloon, but I looked at the dog and I began to think about Spanishtown, and then I threw my fine round hat on the floor and took Munter on my knee and wrapped my old jacket round him ; and as he still went on shivering I put my old trousers over him too, and there I sat the whole night and gave him water to drink out of a cup. And he licked my hand, and the tears came into my eyes, and I thought no more of the girl and no more of the dancing, but only about my comrade and whether he would get well again.

“In the morning he was very bad. I had been on the spree and had spent my money. But I got the address of a vet. and

I took my new blue trousers to a pawnshop and sold them. Then I got hold of the vet. and Munter had some medicine ; and in the evening the girl came to my lodgings to look for me.

“ ‘I have no money,’ I told her, ‘and Munter is sick. You must go by yourself.’

“ ‘Never mind the money,’ said she, ‘and never mind the dog. Just you come along with me.’

“ And I went with her, and she stood me treat, and I came home to the dog and he was cruel bad.

“ So I took the new blue waistcoat and the hat and the boots with the elastic sides and went again to the pawnshop and to the vet. And when I had brought him home with me, and we were alone, I took him by the scruff of the neck and shook him, and told him that I knew I was a big idiot myself, but he must get the dog well or he shouldn’t have a chance of doctoring any more dogs in his day. He whimpered and complained and talked a lot of nonsense, but at

last he said that the dog perhaps had malarial fever and the best thing would be to take him home again at once to his own country. There seemed some sense in this, and I took my fine blue jacket and went off to the pawnshop, and in exchange I got ten marks in money and an old grey overcoat with long tails which trailed after me. And so I set out in the evening from the lodgings, with Munter wrapped up in the coat, to the Lübeck station, and I would take my oath that no one who saw me would suppose I was a sailor who had come off a long voyage.

“ In Lübeck I scrambled on board the boat, and it was quite wonderful,—the nearer we came to Falsterbo, the better my comrade grew ; his eyes began to be bright again and he licked my hand and looked at me, and I looked down and thought that we men are very weak after all, and that it is much easier to sell one's good clothes and get away than to stay and take one's chance of what may happen. But when I came along the

beach with Munter at my heels all the people who were digging for worms in the sand, cried out—

“ ‘Hallo ! who’s this Mormon priest ?’

“ ‘It’s me,’ I answered, and held up the coat-tails.

“ ‘Oh, it’s you !’ they cried.

“ ‘That’s a handsome coat you have got hold of. Has it been round Cape Horn too ?’

“ ‘Three times,’ said I. ‘You can ask Munter. He isn’t a dog that ever tells lies.’

“And so I came home to the old man and exchanged coats with him.”



THE PILOT'S MUSICAL BOX.



THE PILOT'S MUSICAL BOX.

SAID one of the æsthetic young gentlemen who had come to the fishing village and was taking baths for the good of his nerves, to one of the æsthetic young ladies who was also taking baths for the good of her nerves in the fishing village :

“Shall I show you an example of our ancestors, as they probably appeared ?”

“What ancestors ?” she asked, doubtfully.

“Oh, Vikings, Northmen — whatever you call them.” And he pointed up the road to the pilot who was coming towards them.

But the young lady had pictured to herself a very different figure—one clad in gleaming mail, out of the *Valkyrien* or *Waldemar*; something of bronze work, something with a forked beard and floating locks; something whose sound suggests the glitter of a tea-urn, whose look suggests the sound of the note A on a well-tuned piano.

The pilot's height was 6 ft. 6 in. So far he was all right. And the breadth of his shoulders was quite preposterous. But his beard was not forked, but short, grey, and close-cut, and he was dressed in a coarse blue jersey; and the time had not yet come for ladies of fashion to throw themselves with delight upon stockinette garments of that daring shape.

On his head he wore no shining helm, but a felt hat with the peak well bent down; he held no sword in his hand, but an oaken staff; and on his feet—this was the worst of all—on his feet were yellow woollen stockings and wooden shoes. All the same, when he straightened his

broad back and looked straight at a thing or a person with his deep-set eyes and drawn brows, it was best for that person to step aside.

The straight, narrow nose, with its slightly quivering nostrils, the curiously delicate line of the close-shut mouth, and then the chin scarred as by a javelin wound, firm, hard, indomitable,— . . . Well, it is possible after all that he might have managed to dispose of all the *Valkyrien* and of *Waldemar* into the bargain.

Not that there was anything of the bully about him. There were no legends told about his exploits in that line ; only every one was aware that he was enormously strong.

In the summer, when the fair-weather humour of the visitors spread to the original inhabitants of the village, the pilot was sometimes seized with a wish to take part in some little sociability. In the inn garden he would accept a proffered glass, and when some student's fresh voice sang some lively song the old man would

sit blinking his eyes, with his head a little on one side, lifting the toes of his wooden shoes and bringing them down with a sharp little stamp — after which he would raise his glass and break into a combination of two different national songs, a composition in which the words “thrush,” “north,” “spring,” “breezes low,” and “streamlet’s flow” just managed to get beyond the barrier of his teeth and were suddenly called back and consigned to oblivion with a deep, deep sigh.

No one who knew the pilot ever took it amiss when after that deep sigh, he shoved his glass from him, rose without any greeting, and went his way without any farewell.

Occasionally his excitement over the song and the company would rise into a sudden outbreak of wild, alarmingly wild, merriment, during which the old man would stamp about recklessly, in a kind of reel, uttering short sharp cries which, judging from the expression of his face, were indicative of mirth,

but which sounded in the ears of those present exactly like a seagull's note of warning.

When a fit like this was over, the pilot vanished and for several days remained absolutely invisible, as if to give time for the impression made by his want of self-control, to pass over.

This was in summer; and both the pilot and the fishing village were best off in the summer.

But in winter ?

In winter the old man was seldom to be seen outside the fine, roomy house where he and Madam Paaske lived together. Madam Paaske was a widow, a distant relation of his, well acquainted with his habits, acquainted with life, but acquainted with no one else, because she never went outside their own door. During the greater part of the many years that he had been a widower, the people in the village knew that she had kept house for him without speaking so much as a dozen words either to him or to any one else. It was known further that her husband had been a

barber and had shaved the chins of the last generation, set up their elegant cockscombs and had rendered them many other small services, both in life and in death. Everything else that concerned Madam Paaske had been laid aside and forgotten, under a close veil of silence on her part and failing curiosity on the part of the village. She was there, she kept house for him, she managed him in her quiet way, and she knitted. That was all; it was enough.

In the winter the village was not nearly such an amusing place as in the summer. It was downright melancholy—and specially so for a man like the pilot, who had “fetched the harbour,” and for whom the hours by no means went by in seven-leagued boots.

The pilot neither read the newspaper himself nor cared about hearing what was in it from other people.

“It’s all a lot of rigmarole,” he used to say—and so that occupation was wanting. Behind this assertion there lay perhaps a little personal feeling. It was

said, at least, that in the days when he was still fit for work, one pitch dark night, in driving sleet and a strong current, the vessel he was steering had gone aground. The accident was in no way serious; he was known to be well skilled in his profession and the story was soon forgotten among many other occurrences great and small. But it was supposed that the report of the incident, which appeared in some little paper or other, perhaps in a single expression overstepped the limits of what was correct, in a strictly nautical sense.

In any case, it was from this time that the slight interest the pilot felt in the press generally, may be dated. It was all rigmarole; and now and then he added the explanatory remark—"It isn't as if they knew anything about the things they are always writing of."

The winter was long in the village. The old man never went to the inn, except on very specially festive occasions; such, for example, as the banquet

arranged to celebrate the jubilee of a certain office, and to this he was invited as the guest of the evening. People said that he took a glass too many that night, but it was not true. His sudden outbreak of merriment was certainly wilder then than ever before, but the glass had nothing to do with it; as far as that goes, he could easily have drunk the whole of the jubilee celebrators under the table and have held a full tumbler balanced on the tip of his forefinger over the fallen champions afterwards. No, that wasn't it.

The winter was long and melancholy in the village and the old man kept indoors in the fine, roomy, somewhat dreary house where the hours went by so slowly, keeping time to the click of Madam Paaske's knitting-pins.

Now and then in the twilight the door was opened that led into the little garden, that in summer was full of fragrance and shade and luxuriant growth, tended by Madam Paaske's gentle hands which never laid aside the knit-

ting-pins except to weed in the beds and tie up the roses. But there was nothing there now but mire or snowdrifts and the wind rattling and raging in the bushes and trees, and the wind it was that called the old man out of doors to have a look at the weather.

He might just as well have let the weather alone; for he had nothing whatever to do with the sea, now that he had retired with his rank of master pilot, and the whole pilot station was managed by the assistant who had his little look-out house further down the beach, just there where the dark roof of the boat-house rose sadly on its tarred posts, against the grey monotony of the autumn or winter sky.

Nevertheless it was his inveterate habit to go out and look and listen. The old man hardly believed that the weather could be weather at all, however wretched it might be, unless he opened the door two or three times in the course of the evening; at all events it passed so much of his time.

Sometimes he went round the garden, or even wandered a little further, half-way to the beach, to listen and gaze through wind and sleet, through snow or rain; but he never went as far as the boat-shed except in spring or summer, when the evenings were light, and you could see what the shed really was and there was nothing to suggest such a stupid, improbable notion as that it might be a scaffold, a place of execution, something with stakes and a gallows, and Heaven knows what.

The people of the village asserted that in the watches of the night, when the grey quivering dawn was at hand, the old man walked in his sleep. He used to walk in his sleep straight down to the boat-shed, and there stand listening to the roar or the ripple of the sea; and when the wind howled through the airy rafters of the open shed and under the collar beams of the roof, among the oars and spars, where a rope-end falling from a mast swung clattering to and fro—or when some dark and quiet night, when the air was

damp and close, the snow that had fallen by day came away in lumps and slid down with a heavy plunge—the old man started, cried out like a child, and ran fast back to the house, where, in the meantime, Madam Paaske had risen from her bed, and was ready to receive him.

This was what was said. And conjecture went on to relate that Madam Paaske treated him exactly as if he were a child, except for his extraordinary strength, and the passionate fits of absolute despair to which he abandoned himself after each of these attacks of somnambulism. She chided him a little; with a single, well-chosen word she soothed him a little; she lighted the night-light and sat at his bedside, knitting and knitting, while her quiet eyes never left him till his restless, wandering glance gradually relaxed and grew calmer—and finally he fell asleep, and did not wake till long past noon.

The more imaginative of the villagers asserted into the bargain that her deceased husband, the

wise barber, had left her the recipe for an ointment with which she touched the pilot's eyelids, and so put him to sleep. It must always be an ointment, something external, that produces these effects!

Apart from this point, everything was in reality very much as it was believed to be.

The pilot's gigantic frame was worn by a constantly gnawing mental disease. He had gone to the town to consult its famous doctors and as that did no good he tried the wise woman; she was brought from a great distance, and her fee was as big as that of all the famous doctors together. The result was the same. Madam Paaske, whose reverence for her deceased husband made her take the doctors' side, and who had, therefore, resisted the wise woman as long as possible — Madam Paaske had only the satisfaction of seeing that the wise woman could do no more than other people. And then came an unhappy time for the pilot, in which the remnant of his old iron will was crushed

in the teeth of disease, in the jaws of that beast of prey.

Some days he would stay in bed, with his head under the sheet, sit up without knowing why, leave his bed without knowing why; he would sit in a chair and sob like a sick girl, or fret and grumble like a naughty child, and neither Madam Paaske's monosyllables, nor her long, lingering reproachful or sympathetic glance, nor the drowsy click of her knitting-needles did him any good. The old hero had become a child, a restless, burdensome creature, a being without a will of his own, who yet had still too much will and too much strength left over from his reckless youth and stern, imperious manhood.

In the case of a child there is always the rod as a last resource. But this resource was denied to poor Madam Paaske; and even had she been a match for the old man in bodily strength, she would never have found it in her heart to strike him, although in his darkest and most intractable moments he was sometimes

himself almost ready to come to blows with his unwearied watcher.

There was one thing that sometimes did good: it was when, crooning to himself in the long winter, he now and then managed to grope his way to some echo of the short bright summer melodies. It was impossible for any outsider, even for Madam Paaske, to make out what it was that he was humming between his teeth; but when the wild fit came upon him these detached words came out accompanied by sounds that with a little good-will might be taken for a tune. Finally, as a refuge after his very darkest hours, he turned to an old ship's prayer-book, without cover or title-page, in which there were some verses which he could beat time to with the toe of his wooden shoe upon the floor. It was his life-song, and this was how it went:—

“ And the body, and the body,
That is hidden in the mould,
Shall rise again in glory
To shine like purest gold;
To dwell with Thee for evermore,
Lord God of Sabaoth !

And all the burdens that we bear
Shall then be laid aside,
And in that home of dear delight
Shall every tear be dried ;
And Death itself shall be no more,
Lord God of Sabaoth !”

It is to be observed that the word Sabaoth, clear and prominent, in bold type, and frequently reiterated, with its strange ring and its mysterious letters, had become very precious indeed to the pilot. It was as it were the sum total of the poetry and religious sentiment of the hymn. He did not know what poetry was, he never spoke of religion ; he never went to church, for he said he was too great a sinner. But in the mournful old-world rhymes, clinging close to that mystic name, the pilot sang his prayer, and put his need of comfort and self-control into words.

But as time went by the disease got the upper hand, and threatened to swallow up both the inner and outer music. It grew darker and darker for the old champion, more and more difficult for him to find tunes for

his words or words for his tunes. Madam Paaske was in despair.

Then one day she saw something in a newspaper which she had smuggled into the house. It was an advertisement informing the music-loving public that at a certain place in the town, thanks to unusually fortunate relations with foreign countries, an exceptionably good musical box might be bought for a very reasonable price. There were boxes of all sorts and sizes, but this was something special, and suited in a very remarkable way for "people living in the country and persons suffering from sleeplessness or liable to fits of depression." The arrangements and contents of this musical miracle-worker were exactly described in the advertisement; it was, for example, a musical box "of the newest Swiss construction, with double fittings, with a Turkish drum for the Mazurka, with two peals of bells, with an organ stop, with Heavenly Voices and a Hallelujah."

A Turkish drum, a Hallelujah and Heavenly Voices! Madam

Paaske felt at once that this might be a means of help. Such a combination of the cheerful and the solemn might well minister to a mind diseased. The price was reasonable. Ah, yes; but for that little household, and specially since the pilot had a morbid terror of spending a single superfluous penny, the price was yet terribly high. The old man was always expecting a day to come when in one way or another he should be robbed of his little pension. Some one or other would discover that there was something very odd about him; he would be put in the paper, and the king would stretch out his hand and take his pension away. All that could possibly be scraped together in the meantime must be put by to form a little fund against the day when the blow should fall.

Madam Paaske meditated, pondered, calculated. Possibly they might manage to get one of the very little boxes? But no—there must be Heavenly Voices, chiming bells, and a drum, or it

would be of no use at all. A small box could only produce a slight effect—so thought Madam Paaske in her logical way.

So she began a little war, carried on with immense tact and finesse, with the craft of a Red Indian, calculated to the fraction of a penny on the bread, milk, butter, and sugar, the most necessary necessities of scanty housekeeping. More necessary than any of them, in the dim distance, stood the musical box. That was the goal to be reached, and every possible device and cunning was brought into play by the woman's eye, so quick to perceive ways of evasion or excuse. The upright Madam Paaske trembled silently sometimes when she thought in what a web of deception she was day by day becoming entangled ; but she held out and stood firm, like the statesman whose conscience is identical with the good of the State. She subjected herself to the growing anger and mistrust of the old man ; she bore his searching glances or direct accusations when they settled the

weekly or monthly accounts between them. She fought a pitched battle with him at last, when he wanted to dismiss the old servant, bent double with perpetual toiling and moiling, the only domestic that had been able to stand for long years the severe *régime* of Madam Paaske. With a decided tap of her finger on the table, Madam Paaske declared that Sidse Malene did not cheat him—it was the pilot himself who had forgotten how to count.

On that he went out into the workshop and chopped wood till the splinters made holes in the clay walls, and then he went to bed and stayed there for forty-eight hours, but he sang nothing, neither national songs nor hymns.

The weeks and months went by. It was the kind of winter that every one knows and that no one likes; raw, cold winds, rain, sleet, half-melted snow, then a day or two of frost, and again darkness and rain, and raw, cold wind. Such a winter is enough to put any man beside

himself, and what must it be to one who is ill, like the pilot?

He took refuge oftener and oftener in bed, lying with the sheet drawn over his head, sighing and fretting and letting the hours go by. Now and then, as the weeks passed, there was a faint, transient smile in Madam Paaske's eyes, but he did not see it. He had become suspicious of the one person whom hitherto, however angry he might sometimes be with her, he had regarded as the incarnation of honesty and trustworthiness. And upon honesty he set a very great value; he had lived rigorously, in rigorous circumstances all his life, and he suffered now all the more from seeing himself defrauded in his own house by the last person who was attached to his cheerless life.

He suffered. He had constantly suffered in this way; he had constantly had a longing to love those about him, but he had expected as much from them as from himself, and the more he cared for them, the higher his expectations had risen. . . .

He was always haunted by memories ; there was no end to it ; it became worse and worse. It was worst of all when he turned the sharp point of the question against himself, and asked if perhaps, after all, he had not been too hard ?

So in the dark cold winter afternoon he lay in his room, where the wind kept chattering to him down the chimney, and could not bring himself to cry out to Madam Paaske, because she was false and deceitful ; she cheated him, she stole from him ; some day, perhaps, she would put in one of the newspapers—which one ?—that he was out of his mind, or in any case unfit to keep his rank and his pension.

The sheet was over his face ; and again and again he went over his recollections of things which he had tried a thousand times to seize and fetter—recollections that meanwhile had robbed him of his strength.

There was the eldest boy, his joy and pride. But the boy was too fond of his mother's apron,

and his mother was a soft, good-natured, careless woman, and she came from inland, from the country, where people go sauntering about half the day, halter in hand, and know nothing of danger except when a thunder-storm breaks over the farm. The boy was always wanting to go into the country and the father was always wanting to keep him in the boat. The mother and son were on one side, the father alone on the other. It was force and violence against indulgence and petty deceit. The boy had a gentle disposition, and a taste for quiet amusements and simple little pleasures; he loved specially to have to do with animals and had a passionate affection for horses. But the father came of many, many generations of seamen. He would have it that his son must go to sea, and afterwards into the pilotage. So the son went to sea but soon came back again. Then there was more violence and more force, more indulgence and deceit. The young man was sent off again and this time he did not come

back. They learned from a letter written to his mother that a sailor's life was hateful to him, the intercourse with rough sailors and inconsiderate officers intolerable. He had deserted his ship in an American port, had been caught and punished, had deserted again, and finally some girl had got hold of him. His gentle disposition had sought for some refuge; without experience, with simple ideas which the sea had not had time to salt, he had drifted into the first haven that seemed open to him. Nothing more was heard from him, but it was learnt from other sources that beyond a doubt he had ended in misery and want.

Meanwhile the younger son had been born and had grown up. Grief and disappointment at the sad fate of the elder drove his father to treat the younger boy with increased severity. Upon both parents it had somewhat the same effect; and sometimes he was drawn to one, and sometimes to the other, taking refuge with his mother from his father's hard ways, and yet dis-

playing something of his father's irritable temper towards his mother's weakness, which had been increased by the shock of the death-tidings—a temper likely to grow into critical rejection of her overwhelming caresses.

This boy, too, was to go to sea. It was the only calling in the world which the fearless, enthusiastic pilot thought worthy of a man. The father knew little or nothing of Northmen and Vikings; had he known the history of his ancestors, his deep eyes would probably have sparkled with redoubled pride, as he pointed the boy back to them and said, "That is what you shall be."

The boy certainly did learn something at school about the old sea heroes, but there was that in his nature that led him to contemplate even these brilliant figures with critical eyes. He often asked himself how many Vikings had been lost at sea in those flat-bottomed open ships before they reached the land of wealth, the beckoning shores of glory. He went

further still; he reflected that on the whole a great many sailors must thus have perished, and some pilots among them. He was not filled with any particularly dishonourable terror; he had the average amount of courage that boys have who are born and brought up by the sea. But he had not his father's extreme contempt for death and pride in his calling, and this seemed to the pilot a reason for locking him up or giving him the rope's end on every possible occasion. The mother watched anxiously to see what would come of it. Her health was giving way, her strength failing under the strain of living with an obstinate man whom she had once loved, but who had never understood her well enough to bear with her. She felt that her days were numbered, and she called her husband, the head pilot, to her bedside, and said, "I am going to die."

He did not answer, but looked embarrassed and perplexed.

"What will you do with the boy?" she asked.

"Send him to sea," was the answer.

"Like the other?" she asked, in a voice broken with tears.

He made an averting gesture with his hands.

"When I am dead, who will look after the boy and the house?" she asked.

"I shall look after the boy myself. I don't want any woman in the house," said he.

She felt for his hand and he gave it to her; then she said, "Madam Paaske is a widow; did you know?"

He nodded and was silent.

"She has always been fond of you; I know that. She was not happy with her barber, but she has always been a good woman. If you liked to have her——"

He shook his head.

"When I am dead," she continued, "you must let Madam Paaske come and keep house for you. She will be good to the boy."

"No," he said roughly, and drew away his hand.

She looked at him imploringly, and so she died.

And so the boy went to sea. He made one or two long voyages, and then he came home again, and told no one whether he had taken a liking or a dislike to the sea. And so he passed into the pilot service, to work himself up in his father's wake.

It answered and it didn't answer. There was the same friction, the same small collisions between the two, breaking out occasionally into regular battles, in one of which the father's hand even fell heavily on the son's shoulders. The young man had a taste for rigging a boat, for drawing, for playing a little on the fiddle and on the accordion, for taking part in a Shrove Tuesday procession, or amateur performance in the little seaport town close by. There was an artist's nature in the pilot's son ; the father called him a good-for-nothing. The gulf between the two grew greater and greater, and was widened daily by youth and hot temper, by anger and recklessness, by brutality and defiance;

and yet even now there might have been found some way of throwing a bridge of reconciliation across from the young man to the old, because deep down, under the hard shell, the father loved his son, loved even his follies, which were only too foreign to his own nature; and the rather flippant young fellow, who was so good at making friends, had a great respect in his heart for the old sailor whose courage and skill his own knowledge of the sea had taught him to appreciate rightly. But he was too completely the representative of his profession. The happy moment always slipped by wasted, unused; there was no mediator to step between them; the house was empty and melancholy, the father took refuge in the boat, the son in the ale-house, and so it went on. . . .

And the pilot lay, this dark, melancholy winter afternoon, waiting for the coming of the sleepless night, struggling against his thoughts. They forced him to listen to the sorrowful wailing of the wind; he would have

liked to have heard some tune, some bit of music that might have driven his thoughts away, and have given him peace, if only for a single hour. But the wind wailed in his ears that he was sentenced to go on thinking his thoughts, restless and comfortless as they were.

He had to take out of his past all that had happened to the elder son, how he had been driven from his home, and what had been his lot. And his wife's death and what she had said to him and how she had fastened her eyes in reproachful entreaty upon him, her hard, perhaps over-hard husband. He had to go through it all again. Well, he was what he was, and she was what she was. Men were not all made alike, and when one had done his duty through life, what right had other men—or even a greater than men—to reproach him in that bitter way?

Then he came to the last thing; and the last was the worst. . . . He would *not* go through those thoughts again,

they must leave him in peace. But they would not. The wind was wailing, there was no help for it; the whole thing was there before his eyes.

It was the younger son, and he had slipped deeper and deeper into that miry clay in which it is so easy to set foot, and from which it requires such super-human efforts to get free. The father had thrashed him, banished him from the house. He had come back and had promised amendment and had been forgiven. Then they quarrelled again, and the son had been turned out of doors with an oath.

Then came that dark winter evening when the ragged vagrant had knocked at the door. The father had opened it and looked him in the face. The son had begged and prayed only for a night's shelter.

"You can go and lie in the boathouse, or you can go to the devil!" the father had shouted, slamming the door.

In the night he had lain in his own warm bed, tossing to and fro. He could not tell how

or why, but thoughts came into his mind that seemed to ask if a father's love meant patience and pardon, or only self-sufficiency and pride of race. The old man had risen before the grey dawn. Through the wind and the cold mist he had gone down to the boat-shed, and as he went in he knocked his head against something: . . . it was a dead body, it was the vagrant's feet that hung loose, in their torn and muddy boots. He uttered a shriek and looked up. The son had hung himself high up, under the collar-beam.

The father had cut down the body and had fallen by the side of it, when Sidse Malene came down in the morning with the wheelbarrow, containing tools and provisions for the boatmen. At her urgent entreaty the pilot had risen, biting his lips, and had growled out between his teeth: "Throw the body on to the beach, or wherever you like, but don't bring it into my house."

He himself had gone home with long, steady strides, without noticing what was said around

him. He had shut himself in and had scarcely tasted food for some days, and he was lying on his bed, his hands twisted over his head, his teeth clenched, when Madam Paaske stood in the room.

“What do you want?” he asked, roughly.

“I just want to say that he is buried and I am going to stop here.”

On that the pilot turned round and broke into tearless sobbing that nearly suffocated him. And so the time went as it had gone ever since.

And now he lay there, the old man, waiting for the coming of the sleepless night. And so it would go on day after day, in the dreary house where he had lost all that he had once held dear, all that he had once hoped for, and was now left heart-broken and desolate, with the desolation that life alone is capable of bringing into her own work—although he had not deserved it, either by bad conduct, or self-indulgence, or dereliction of duty. And the last person who had

entered his house, this woman of whom his wife had spoken those words of praise—he laughed aloud. He had lost his sons, he had lost their mother; and now this honest woman was going about, taking advantage of his failing strength to trick him and rob him.

But he would put an end to it. . . He would do . . . he did not know exactly what. He sat straight up with clenched fists, and stared straight out into the darkness, and heard the wind wailing, that cursed wailing that made an honest man's life not worth a farthing. Then he heard Madam Paaske rustling about in the next room. A light was burning in there, and the door was not shut. She was so odious to him at that moment, that he could have shouted a bad word at her. But now there was a snapping sound. What the devil was she winding up the Bornholm clock for at that time of day? . . . What was that? There was singing—aye, and playing, and ringing of bells, and beating of drums!

Impossible! had he gone quite mad? He put his fingers into his ears. When he took them out again, again there were those lovely notes, sounding as if they were come down from the clouds, as if—as if—— He had no other comparison at hand, because he had never heard anything that could be compared to those notes. He sank back; everything melted away from him, all his shadows, all his thoughts. The pilot cried like a child. And when he had done crying he got up and went in to Madam Paaske, and began to dance in front of the splendid musical box.

When he had finished his dance he took Madam Paaske's hand, pressed it hard, and laid it to his eyes and to his lips. He did not say "Forgive me," and she, too, said nothing. In that little household they were always so sparing of their words, but now he understood how and why she had saved. And he began to understand something of the gentler forces of life, which perhaps, after all, are the strongest.

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